



THE

LAND OF GILEAD



THE RUINS OF JERASH.

THE

LAND OF GILEAD

WITH

EXCURSIONS IN THE LEBANON

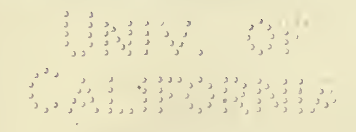
BY

LAURENCE OLIPHANT

AUTHOR OF

'LORD ELGIN'S MISSION TO CHINA,' 'PICCADILLY,' ETC.

"I WILL BRING THEM INTO GILEAD"



WILLIAM BLACKWOOD AND SONS

EDINBURGH AND LONDON

MDCCCLXXX

TO

HER ROYAL HIGHNESS

THE PRINCESS CHRISTIAN

OF SCHLESWIG-HOLSTEIN SONDERBURG-AUGUSTENBURG,
PRINCESS OF GREAT BRITAIN AND IRELAND,

THE FOLLOWING PAGES ARE, BY PERMISSION,

Most respectfully Dedicated,

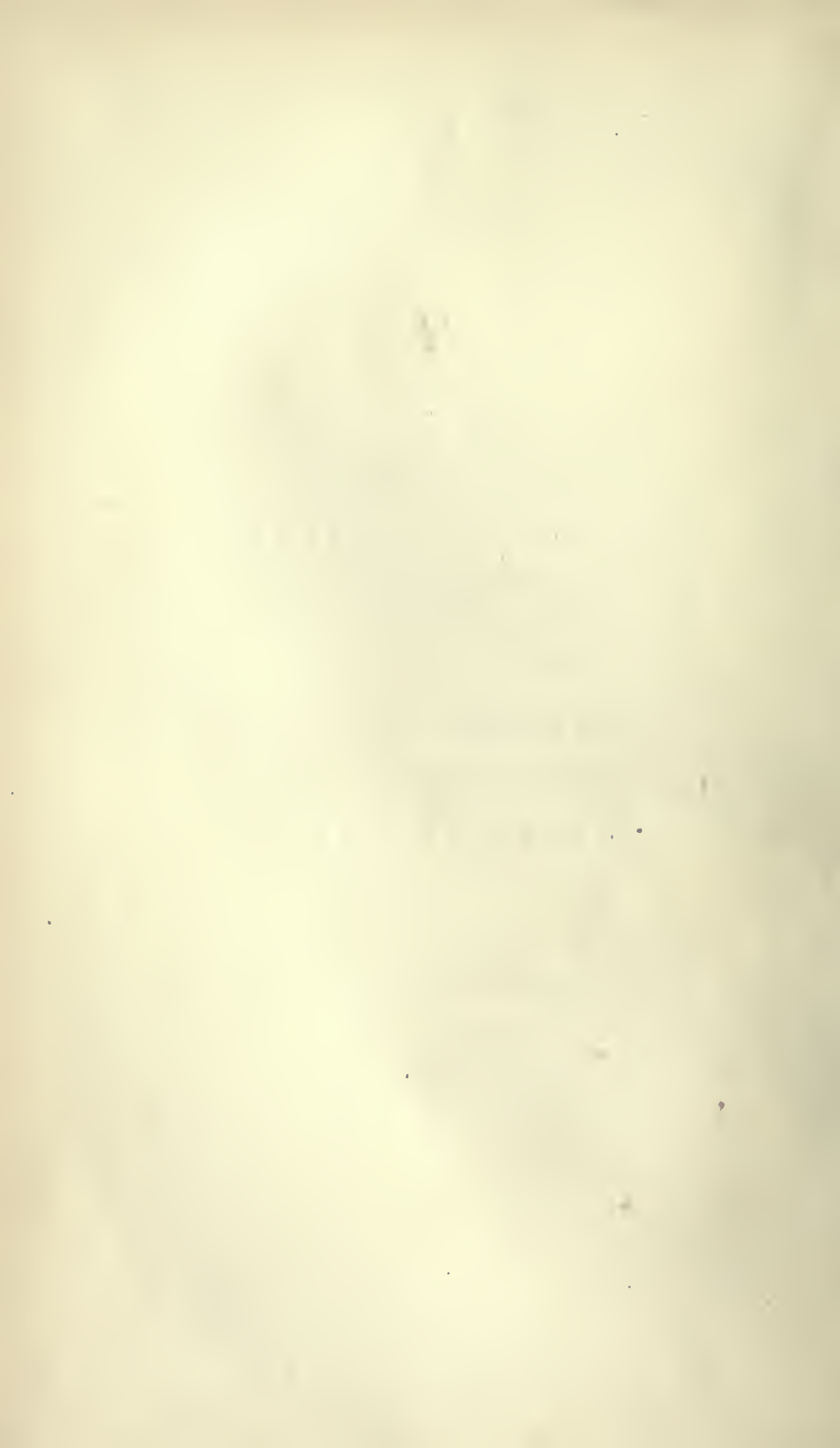
AS A MARK OF DEEP GRATITUDE FOR THE

WARM SYMPATHY AND CORDIAL INTEREST MANIFESTED

BY HER ROYAL HIGHNESS IN THE

AUTHOR'S EFFORTS TO PROMOTE JEWISH

COLONISATION IN PALESTINE.



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INTRODUCTION.

THE travels recorded in the following pages were undertaken in pursuance of an idea which occurred to me shortly after the conclusion of the Treaty of Berlin, and when it became evident that the Eastern Question was about to enter upon a new phase. It was manifest that the immediate effect of that treaty would be to render inevitable an external interference in the domestic affairs of Turkey, of a more pronounced character than had ever existed before; and that this interference was calculated sooner or later to produce most serious complications, unless it could be averted by reforms in the administration springing from the initiative of the Sultan, which should anticipate any such forcible intrusion from without. Whereas the Treaty of 1856, which resulted in the promulgation of the Hatti Houmayoun, carefully provided against any intervention on the part of foreign Powers to enforce the fulfilment of that or any other reformatory measure, the Treaty of Berlin expressly stipulated in favour of such interference in the event of the

expectations of the Powers remaining unsatisfied; and by the Cyprus Convention the Government of the Sultan came under special obligations in regard to the whole of Asia Minor. Having visited Turkey upon three former occasions — in the years 1855, 1860, and 1862—and travelled pretty extensively through the country, I thoroughly realised the fact—familiar to all those acquainted with its administration—that any reform, to be effectual, must begin with the official system at Constantinople; and that, in default of that being possible, the only chance of reform at the extremities, was by a process of decentralisation, which should more or less provide for the administrative autonomy of the provinces to be reformed, and for the immovability during a term of years of the *valis* or governors-general. As, however, it was scarcely to be expected that the Turkish Government would consent to adopt a radical measure of this kind, and apply it throughout the extent of its vast Asiatic dominions, it occurred to me that an experiment might be made on a small scale, and that an evidence might thus be afforded to the Porte of the advantages which would attend the development of a single province, however small, under conditions which should increase the revenue of the empire, add to its population and resources, secure protection of life and property, and enlist the sympathy of Europe, without in any way affecting the sovereign rights of the Sultan. As the objection to all reforms

proposed was, that they involved an increased expenditure which the finances of Turkey were unable to meet, it seemed possible that a scheme which should bring foreign capital with it to carry it out, might be favourably regarded at Constantinople, provided it was not accompanied by obnoxious provisions in regard to foreign supervision — a point upon which the Sultan and his Ministers are not unnaturally extremely sensitive. It appeared to me that this object might be attained by means of a Colonisation Company, and that one of those rich and unoccupied districts which abound in Turkey might be obtained and developed through the agency of a commercial enterprise which should be formed under the auspices of his Majesty, and have its seat at Constantinople—though, as in the case of the Ottoman Bank and other Turkish companies, the capital would be found abroad, provided the charter contained guarantees adequate for the protection of the interests of the shareholders.

The next questions which naturally presented themselves to my mind were,—first, the locality to be selected for the experiment; and secondly, the class of people who should be invited to come as colonists. The objection to foreigners who were at the same time Christians seemed insurmountable, as by the existing colonisation law it was made a *sine quâ non* that any colonists permanently settling in Turkey in Asia should become Ottoman subjects—a provi-

sion with which foreign Christians were extremely unlikely to comply, as they would thereby forfeit all special privileges of consular protection, and lose the benefit of the capitulations. Moreover, the rivalries of the various Christian sects, already productive of so much mischief throughout Turkey, and the jealousy of the Powers supporting them, would certainly render all attempts at harmonious colonisation abortive. The idea, therefore, of colonising with European Christians was speedily dismissed. The possibility of finding, under the auspices of such a Company, an asylum for the thousands of Moslem refugees, who, driven from their homes in Bulgaria and Roumelia, were starving in various parts of the empire, also suggested itself; but the difficulty in this case arose from the extreme improbability of finding the capital in Christian Europe which would be required for the transportation of thousands of penniless men, women, and children, and establishing them under conditions which should enable them to subsist through the early stages of the development of a new country: the houses to be built, the stock and farm implements to be provided, and the facilities of transport to be created, would all fall exclusively upon the Company. The chances of remuneration, therefore, were not likely to tempt capitalists, while European sympathies in favour of poor Moslems were not sufficiently strong to make it likely that the charitable public would come forward to a sufficient extent in favour

of any such enterprise. There was, in fact, only one race in Europe who were rich, and who did not, therefore, need to appeal to Christian capitalists for money to carry through the whole undertaking; who were not Christians, and to whom, therefore, the objections of the Porte to the introduction of more rival Christian sects did not apply; who had never alarmed the Turkish Government by national aspirations, but, on the contrary, had always proved themselves most loyal and peacable subjects of his Majesty; who were nevertheless strongly attached by historical association to a province of Asiatic Turkey, and to whom the inducement of once more becoming proprietors of its sacred soil might prove strong enough to tempt them to comply with the probable conditions of the Turkish Government; more especially as the persecution to which they were subjected by some Christian Governments in Europe, contrasted most unfavourably with the toleration with which they were treated in Turkey itself. It was thus that I found myself, by a process of deduction, compelled to turn for the locality of the colony to Palestine, and for the colonists to the Jews. The more I examined the project from this point of view, the more desirable on political grounds did it appear. The establishment of a Jewish colony in Palestine, under the Imperial auspices, was not likely to excite the suspicion or arouse the hostility of the Powers of Europe, and much less of the Sultan him-

self. On the contrary, his Majesty, by affording an asylum for this people, so much oppressed by certain Christian Governments, had an opportunity of contrasting his clemency with their severity, of enlisting sympathy in behalf of Turkey in those countries which have espoused the Jewish cause, and of proving that in a province to which the capitulations did not extend, a community might be formed under conditions which afforded greater guarantees for order and good government than could be found in those provinces where conflicting consular jurisdictions were a perpetual source of disturbance.

The Jews themselves have borne repeated testimony to the fact that, so far as they are concerned, Christian fanaticism in Eastern Europe is far more bitter than Moslem; and indeed the position of Jews in Turkey is relatively favoured. They are, as a rule, on good terms with the people amongst whom they live, and enjoy the protection of the Government, such as it is. In illustration of this, I may quote the concluding paragraphs of the firman granted by the Sultan Abdul Medjid to the Israelites in his empire, at the request of Sir Moses Montefiore, in 1840. It is addressed to the Chief Judge at Constantinople, and at the head of the document the Sultan wrote with his own hand the sentence—"Let that be executed which is prescribed in this firman." After alluding to an ignorant prejudice which prevailed among the Mohammedans, and

which seems to have led to persecution, that the Jews were "accustomed to sacrifice a human being to make use of his blood at their feast of the Passover," and stating, "the charges made against the Jews and their religion are nothing but pure calumnies," it concludes :—

"For this reason, and the love we bear to our subjects, we cannot permit the Jewish nation (whose innocence of the crime alleged against them is evident) to be vexed and tormented upon accusations which have not the least foundation in truth, but that, in conformity to the *hatti scherif* which has been proclaimed at Gulhané, the Jewish nation shall possess the same advantages and enjoy the same privileges as are granted to the numerous other nations who submit to our authority.

"The Jewish nation shall be protected and defended.

"To accomplish this object, we have given the most positive orders that the Jewish nation dwelling in all parts of our empire shall be perfectly protected as well as all other subjects of the Sublime Porte, and that no person shall molest them in any manner whatever (except for a just cause), neither in the free exercise of their religion, nor in that which concerns their safety and tranquillity. In consequence, the present firman, which is ornamented at the head with our *hoomaioon* (sign-manual), and emanates from our Imperial Chancellerie, has been delivered to the Israelitish nation.

"Thus you, the above-mentioned judge, when you know the contents of this firman, will endeavour to act with great care in the manner therein prescribed. And in order that nothing may be done in opposition to this firman at any time hereafter, you will register it in the archives of the tribunal; you will afterwards deliver it to the Israelitish

nation; and you will take great care to execute our orders and this our sovereign will.

"Given at Constantinople, the 12th Ramazan, 1256 (6th of November 1840)."

That the Jews would respond to an invitation from the Sultan to return and take possession of the soil in a district of their own ancient heritage, I did not doubt, notwithstanding the reflection which a few of their co-religionists in the great centres of European civilisation have cast upon their devotion to the land of their fathers.

I append two articles from the 'Jewish Chronicle' of the 9th January and 11th June 1880, which, as that paper is the leading Hebrew organ in this country, does, it may be assumed, represent the feeling of the nation on this subject;[1] and in this impression I have been strongly confirmed by Jews with whom I have since conversed in the East. The total number of the Hebrew race to-day is between six and seven millions. There are in Europe about 5,000,000; in Asia, over 200,000; in Africa, nearly 100,000; in America, from 1,000,000 to 1,500,000. More than half the European Jews — 2,621,000 — reside in Russia; 1,375,000 inhabit Austria, of whom 575,000 live in the Polish province of Galicia; 512,000 live in Germany; Roumania is credited with 274,000, and Turkey itself with over 100,000. There are 70,000 in Holland, 50,000 in England,

[1] See Appendix I.

49,000 in France, 35,000 in Italy, and the other European countries contain very limited proportions. Of the Asiatic Jews, 20,000 are assigned to India and 25,000 to Palestine. As the area of land which I should propose in the first instance for colonisation would not exceed a million, or at most a million and a half of acres, it would be hard if, out of nearly 7,000,000 of people attached to it by the tradition of former possession, enough could not be found to subscribe a capital of £1,000,000, or even more, for its purchase and settlement, and if, out of that number, a selection of emigrants could not be made, possessing sufficient capital of their own to make them desirable colonists. I should not expect such men to come from England or France, but from European and Asiatic Turkey itself, as well as from Russia, Galicia, Roumania, Servia, and the Slav countries where they are more especially oppressed, and where there are many among the richer classes who would gladly exchange the persecution under which they live for the freer air which they would breathe under Turkish rule in the land of their forefathers. It is true that about 25,000 are there already; but they are, for the most part, of a mendicant class, and are deprived of that protection which they would enjoy under the auspices of a company and a charter securing them a certain amount of self-government. As it is, the condition of the Sephardim Jews in Palestine contrasts favour-

ably with that of the Jews in Russia or Roumania; while in other parts of Asiatic Turkey they form in many instances the richest section of the community, and contribute largely by their capital to the prosperity of the country. Mr Geary, in an interesting account of a journey recently undertaken from India to Europe through Asiatic Turkey, thus describes a community of Jews which he visited near Bagdad :—

"The Jews of the town of Hillah," he says, "form a large body, and the capitalists among them advance money to the cultivators to make irrigation-cuttings and plant crops. It is said that agriculture, such as it is, of half Mesopotamia, would come to an end if it were not for the Jews of Bagdad and Hillah, who are in that country what the Soucars are in India. They carefully abstain from buying land, and, as a rule, from building houses, so that when the moment comes that summons them to Jerusalem, they may not be delayed by the necessity of turning irremovable property into ready money. For the most part, they are the descendants of the Jews of the Captivity: a Jewish community has lived in this strange land by the waters of Babylon since Israel was led captive; but it has never ceased to yearn for a return, more or less triumphant and miraculous, to the heritage of the seed of Abraham."[1]

It has been objected that the Jews are not agricul-

[1] Through Asiatic Turkey (G. Geary), vol. I. p. 189.

The following letter which appeared not long since in a Jewish

turists, and that any attempt to develop the agricultural resources of a country through their instrumentality must result in failure. In the first instance, it is rather as landed proprietors, than as labourers on the soil, that I should propose to invite them to emigrate into Palestine, where they could lease their

paper published in the United States, called the 'American Hebrew,' shows that these expectations are not confined to the Jews of Hillah :

"BACK TO PALESTINE.

"To the 'American Hebrew.'

"While I admire your wisdom in what you so happily have termed, steering clear of the 'Scylla of Orthodoxy and the Charybdis of Reform, excuse me if I draw your attention to the significancy of Mr Oliphant's scheme, which is attracting such wide and remarkable attention, and which has received already the unofficial sanction of such influential powers as the Earls of Beaconsfield and Salisbury.

"As far as I understand, reformers in this country only abandon the doctrine of the re-establishment of our State. Orthodox Jews do not; and while they declare that it does not necessarily imply that all the Jews in the world shall be caged up between the Euphrates and the Mediterranean, any more than all Americans are in America or Frenchmen in France, they say, and with justice, that the geographical position and extreme fertility of Palestine point to a grand future for it, as soon as it is rescued from the incapable government of the Porte, sublime only in its indifference to progress in all sublime parts of its happy empire.

"Now, as an attentive reader of the Bible, I cannot but be struck with the fact that a realisation of Mr Oliphant's scheme would be a wonderful coincidence when compared with the announcements in the sacred volume. A colonisation of Palestine by the Jews, with the sanction and assistance of the various kings and potentates, would be in strict accordance with such passages as Isa. ch. xlix. v. 22, 23, where it says, Gentiles shall be the active instruments of the restoration, kings and queens the prime movers. See also ch. lx. v. 3, 4, 5 ; lxi. v. 4, 5 ; lxvi. v. 20.

"I would like some abler pen to write upon this subject than that of M. H. BIRNEBAUM."

own land at high prices to native farmers if they preferred, instead of lending money on crops at 20 or 25 per cent to the peasants, as they do at present, and for which they have no landed security; but it is probable that the prospect of a large remunerative return for the investment of their capital would soon induce them to acquire a knowledge of farming themselves sufficient for all practical purposes. At Lydda, about ten miles from Jaffa, fifty-five Jewish families, composed of Sephardim and Ashkenazim, have recently established themselves on a tract of upwards of 2000 acres of land, which they are cultivating with great success. Indeed, among the Sephardim in Palestine many excellent agriculturists are to be found. In the Sandjak of Acre, Lieutenant Kitchener came upon a village in the course of his survey, the whole population of which were Jewish agriculturists, who maintained that their ancestors had tilled the same soil from time immemorial. In Morocco and other parts of Africa, Jews are to a considerable extent employed in agriculture, while in Russia agricultural colonies of Jews have been tried with marked success. In a recent number of the 'Times' one of its own correspondents remarks: "The Russo-Polish and Lithuanian towns are swarming with such a large and unemployed Jewish population, that the civic authorities are no longer able to support them, and the Government have therefore resolved to found more agricultural

colonies in the various provinces for the reception of this superfluous Hebrew *proletariat*, those created several years ago having of late shown signs of prosperity,—a remarkable truth, I may take the liberty to add, in view of the fact that in no country whatsoever, where they settle, do the gifted descendants of Jacob show anything but the most deep-rooted aversion from manual labour." There can be no doubt that this inaptitude and dislike to field-labour arises partly from the religious sentiment which has operated to prevent their becoming landholders anywhere except in their own country, and partly from the difficulties which both the Governments and the peoples in many countries have opposed to their becoming proprietors of the soil; but their early history testifies that no such objection to a rural life existed in former days, while in some parts of Asiatic Turkey they to this day retain those pastoral habits which especially characterised the race. In the Kurdo-Jewish district the shepherds are principally Jews; while several wandering tribes of the Arabian desert, though called Arabs, are purely Jewish, and to this day pasture their flocks of sheep and camels upon its oases. I am well aware that the Alliance Israelite Universelle has established an agricultural school at Jaffa known as the "Mikveh Israel," consisting of 780 acres of market-garden, where Jewish children are trained and educated in agricultural pursuits, which cannot be considered altogether a suc-

cess. This is partly owing to the extremely unfortunate choice of the land, which is close to the great sand-dunes which bound the shores of Palestine, and which, advancing, it is said, a yard a-year, have already partially invaded the property; and partly owing to the absence of any protection against the extortions of the Turkish Government and the hostility of the native population,—objections which would not arise in a country where there were no settled agricultural inhabitants to compete with, and under conditions especially adapted to provide against undue interference on the part of the Government, and which should insure the necessary protection. It is not, however, upon Jewish labour that Hebrew capitalists emigrating to a colony in Palestine would need to rely; and I have shown, in my description of the tract which I propose for colonisation, from whence their labour could be drawn.

At the same time, were any further evidence required that the Jews consider themselves qualified as agriculturists, that they are eager to emigrate in that capacity from the countries in which they are now oppressed and persecuted, and that the land upon which their longing eyes are fixed as their future home is Palestine, it is to be found in the account contained in the following letter from the president and members of a society lately formed in Roumania—dated Bucharest, 20th August 1880, according to our calendar—to the 'Jewish Chronicle':

To the Editor of the 'Jewish Chronicle.'

SIR,—We have long heard that you are always ready to devote your valued columns to anything involving the welfare and prosperity of your brethren, and that your great object is to promote their interests. We therefore entreat that you will grant a hearing to us who seek your assistance.

The troubles which the Jews of Roumania are compelled to suffer are well known to you. It is a land whose princes are like the wolves of the forest, in their endeavour to annihilate the children of Israel. With fearful zeal they seek to persecute us; one day they pursue us under the name of religious enthusiasm, and on the morrow they abandon the cry which is so disgraceful to them. But then they conceal their hatred under the name of economy, alleging that the state of trade and mercantile prospects of the country compel them to act oppressively to the Jews who absorb the substance of the Roumanians, and many other such excuses. Thus are we constantly and severely attacked, and our powers of endurance are exhausted. We have therefore resolved, after mature deliberation, to leave the country. With this view we have formed ourselves into a Society for the Colonisation of the Holy Land, consisting of a hundred families. Every one of the members is experienced in the work of cultivating the soil, and it is our intention to journey to Palestine to "till the ground and to guard it." The members will subscribe 400 francs each, and the sum of 40,000 francs thus subscribed, it is our wish to send to the Board of Deputies in London, one of whose objects is to found a Memorial in honour of Sir Moses Montefiore. We purpose that the Board shall purchase land in Palestine and found a colony for us, and that the expenses thus incurred by the Board shall be refunded by us in ten years—for we have no wish that the Board shall give us charity, only that funds may be granted to us as a

loan. The project would not necessitate a very large outlay, as it would now be an easy matter to obtain land from the Turkish Government on a ten years' agreement, and it would suffice if 20,000 or 30,000 francs were added to the 40,000, which we would send as a first instalment. With God's blessing we should be able to pay off this debt entirely. Until this is done, the ground and everything which shall be provided for the colony, is to be under the name of the Board as security.

There seems to us to be another advantage to recommend our scheme to the minds of our brethren. It would offer to the inhabitants of the Holy Land opportunities of learning agriculture through our means, so that they might escape the sad charge of eating the bread of idleness. We intend sending concurrently with this a letter to the heads of the Board of Deputies, and we therefore beg of you to use your powerful influence on our behalf with our benevolent brethren. We trust that the valuable aid of your journal will be effective in bringing speedy assistance to one hundred distressed families. If this object is attained, the Sir Moses Montefiore Testimonial will be realised, for which a large sum of money has already been collected. The time has certainly arrived for something to be done.

With the earnest hope that you will inspire the hearts of the lovers of Israel with a desire to help their brethren, we beg, honoured sir, to subscribe ourselves,

ABRAHAM WEINFIELD, President.
HIRSCH GRALEN,
NISAN AUBEWITCH,
SAMUEL BRAUNSCHWEIN,
ABRAHAM SCHENBERG, } Members.

SOCIETY FOR THE COLONISATION OF THE HOLY LAND,
BUCHAREST, *Ellul* 13*th*, 5640.

The correspondence to which this appeal from Bucharest gave rise will be found in the Appendix,[1] and I trust it may result in action being taken in the matter. That the Jews in England share the sentiments of their Roumanian co-religionists, may be gathered from the following paragraph extracted from their leading organ in this country, alluding to the late change of Government and its bearing upon the scheme which I presented at the Porte :—

"It is to be hoped that the Liberal leaders may see fit to give, if it be only unofficially, some kind of countenance, as did the Conservative authorities, to Mr Laurence Oliphant's excellent scheme for the peaceful and non-political colonisation of a portion of Palestine by our people. Such sanction would, more than anything else, show that this scheme is wholly of a non-political character—a guarantee greatly needed by the timorous Ottoman rulers, who see the shadow of politics in all regenerative plans. The Liberal party may count on the assistance of the Jews in all serious efforts towards reforming matters in the East. We have too much at stake to be indifferent in the matter, and too large a proportion of brethren in deep suffering from the present condition of affairs to remain supine. The people of England—who include the Jews of England—cry out for reform in the East in the name of our common humanity."[2]

It was indeed my hope that, by enabling the Porte to take the initiative in this project of internal reform, it would be deprived of any political aspect, as

[1] Appendix II. [2] 'Jewish Chronicle,' 9th April 1880.

suggested by English interests exclusively; for it is beyond a question that whatever conduces towards the maintenance of the integrity of the Ottoman empire in Asia is not only in the interests of England, but of the peace of Europe. If, owing to the refusal of the Sultan to entertain it, I now allude to its political bearings, it is not because I desire to impair that integrity, but because, while it should undoubtedly be the policy of England to do all in her power to support the Sultan in any attempts which he may make to reform the administration of his Government, and in his own interest to exercise all legitimate pressure upon his Majesty in that direction, we cannot be blind to the fact that the opposition to reform in certain quarters is so determined as to render the task almost hopeless, and that every day increases the danger of the premature dissolution of the empire. It is most unfortunate that the efforts which England is making to avert any such catastrophe should be misconstrued at Constantinople into a desire to obtain possession of Asia Minor,—a misconception which has acquired so firm a hold on some official minds, that well-meant endeavours to consolidate and strengthen the Turkish empire were met with suspicion and opposition, until at last the catastrophe has become imminent, which it was the interest of England, no less than of Turkey, to avert. If, immediately after the Treaty of Berlin, the Porte had frankly acted upon the advice of

England, and relied upon the honesty of her desire to preserve Asia Minor to the Sultan, instead of fostering the suspicion that she wished to conquer it for herself, I believe that a reform which should have begun at the centre, and extended to the extremities of the empire, might have been successfully carried out. Unfortunately it is now too late, the patience of England is exhausted, new political combinations have been formed, and it behoves us to anticipate the complications which may arise out of the altered relations of England and Turkey. Political events in the East have so shaped themselves, that Palestine, and especially the provinces to the east of the Jordan, owing to their geographical position, have now become the pivot upon which of necessity they must ultimately turn. Situated between the Holy Places at Jerusalem and the Asiatic frontier of Russia, between the Mediterranean and the Red Sea, between Syria and Egypt, their strategic value and political importance must be apparent at a glance; and the day is probably not far distant when it may be found that the most important interests of the British empire may be imperilled by the neglect to provide in time for the contingencies which are now looming in the immediate future. I have adverted to these at some length in the last chapter, as well as to the policy which the result of a year's negotiation at Constantinople leads me to believe would be most likely to secure the desired results.

Nor can we, in connection with this project and the probable future of Palestine, ignore the great change which has taken place during the last fifty years in the relations which the Jewish race occupy towards the Governments of Europe. As a consequence of the more enlightened policy which has been pursued towards them of later years, they have been enabled to increase in wealth and numbers, while their social and political status has been so improved as to have made it possible for them to acquire an almost commanding influence in the finance and press of many civilised countries. It is evident, therefore, that a colony founded by their enterprise, under the auspices of the Sultan, would enjoy a protection of a very special character, and that the influence of the race upon the several Governments under which they possess civil rights would be exercised in its favour.

It is somewhat unfortunate that so important a political and strategical question as the future of Palestine should be inseparably connected in the public mind with a favourite religious theory. The restoration of the Jews to Palestine has been so often urged upon sentimental or Scriptural grounds, that now, when it may possibly become the practical and common-sense solution of a great future difficulty, a prejudice against it exists in the minds of those who have always regarded it as a theological chimera, which it is not easy to remove. The mere

accident of a measure involving most important international consequences, having been advocated by a large section of the Christian community, from a purely Biblical point of view, does not necessarily impair its political value. On the contrary, its political value once estimated on its own merits and admitted, the fact that it will carry with it the sympathy and support of those who are not usually particularly well versed in foreign politics is decidedly in its favour. I would avail myself of this opportunity of observing that, so far as my own efforts are concerned, they are based upon considerations which have no connection whatever with any popular religious theory upon the subject.

In the event—scarcely, I fear, to be expected—of wiser counsels prevailing at the Porte, and of the introduction at Constantinople of institutions which should impart some stability and homogeneity to the Cabinet, and increase the responsibility of Ministers to the country, by the creation of a popularly elected chamber, however small, it is possible that the dangers which I have indicated might be averted, and that a new and better system of government, under which existing abuses would be remedied, might be inaugurated. In that case the extension of an experiment of colonisation—under which all colonists should become, *ipso facto*, Ottoman subjects—throughout Palestine, would be a source of strength to the Sultan's empire. Indeed, if the system upon

which the colony was administered proved successful, it might serve as a model for the rest of Syria and Asia Minor, and might prove a means of illustrating the inutility of the capitulations which, practically though indirectly enabling a discrimination to be made, as they do now, between two classes of his Majesty's subjects, create a serious obstacle to reform.

There would then be no reason why Christians should under some circumstances enjoy protection and privileges denied to Moslems, and under others be the victims of special persecution; for the same treatment might be applied to them which secured the good government of the colonists without consular interference. So long as the rival Christian communities—of which there are fourteen in Syria alone, seven Catholic and seven anti-Catholic—have power to invoke the foreign protection that suits them, whenever they feel, either justly or unjustly, aggrieved with the Government or with one another, so long will every *vilayet* be a hotbed of diplomatic and religious intrigue, and the authority of the central Government be undermined, until at last the fate which has overtaken European Turkey, in consequence of foreign interference and agitation in its internal affairs, will be precipitated upon the Asiatic provinces of the empire.

Before deciding definitely whether the scheme was a practicable one or not, I found that it would be

necessary to visit the country, with the view of selecting the district and examining the local conditions; and even then, provided that a region adapted for the purpose could be found, everything would depend upon the disposition manifested by the Porte to entertain the idea. Prior to starting, however, it seemed to be my first duty to lay the matter before the Government, with the view of obtaining their support and approval, and I therefore communicated to the then Prime Minister and Lord Salisbury the outline of the project. From both Ministers I received the kindest encouragement and assurances of support, so far as it was possible to afford it without officially committing the Government. And I was instructed to obtain, if possible, the unofficial approval of the French Minister of Foreign Affairs of the scheme. I therefore proceeded to Paris, and submitted it to M. Waddington, who was sufficiently favourably impressed with the idea to give me a circular letter to the French ambassador at Constantinople and other diplomatic and consular representatives in Turkey. I was also similarly provided with letters of recommendation from our own Foreign Office.

I would venture to express most respectfully my gratitude and thanks to his Royal Highness the Prince of Wales, and to their Royal Highnesses the Prince and Princess Christian of Schleswig-Holstein, for the warm interest and cordial

sympathy with which they regarded the project, and which encouraged me to prosecute it. I would also take this opportunity of tendering my hearty acknowledgments to my numerous friends, Christian and Jewish, who were so kind as to afford me their assistance and advice. It is, however, only since my return to England that I have become aware how deep and widespread is the interest which has been felt in the successful issue of an undertaking which involves such important philanthropic and political results. If the preliminary stage of negotiation with the Turkish Government was not crowned with the success which I had anticipated, it must be remembered that I attempted it alone and comparatively unaided. So far from being discouraged, my late experience more than ever convinces me that the scheme is in all respects practicable, and that it is only necessary for the public to take it up, supported by the Government, in order to overcome the resistance which I encountered at Constantinople, and which was due to an altogether exceptional combination of adverse influences.

Under any circumstances, it is impossible that the region which comprises within its limits the luxuriant pasture-lands of Jaulan, the magnificent forest-clad mountains of Gilead, the rich arable plains of Moab, and the fervid subtropical valley of the Jordan, can remain much longer neglected. Whether we regard it from an archæological, a commercial, or a political

point of view, this territory possesses an interest and importance unrivalled by any tract of country of similar extent in Asiatic Turkey. It remains for England to decide whether she will undertake the task of exploring its ruined cities, of developing its vast agricultural resources, by means of the repatriation of that race which first entered into its possession three thousand years ago, and of securing the great political advantages which must accrue from such a policy. I have considered that it would be most judicious for the present to refrain from publishing the project of the charter of the company which I submitted to the Turkish Government, after it had been at their request carefully framed and elaborated by their own law advisers in such a manner as should, in my opinion, offer the most effectual guarantees for the just and satisfactory administration of the colony, and the interests of the shareholders, without in any way infringing upon the sovereign rights of the Sultan; but I hope and believe that it may still form the basis upon which a company may be founded. If the result of my efforts to awaken that interest in the subject which it deserves, and the appeal which this book contains, meet with the response which I anticipate, I shall be happy to co-operate in any plan which may seem best calculated to carry it out.

About the middle of February last year I left England for Syria.



THE

LAND OF GILEAD.

CHAPTER I.

ARRIVAL AT BEYROUT—PREPARATIONS FOR THE START—SIDON—NABATIYEH—THE METAWALIES—THEIR RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCES—THE MELCHITES—THE CASTLE OF BELFORT—THE SCENERY OF THE LITANY—THE MERJ AYUN—VIEW OF THE HULEH—CAPABILITIES OF THE PLAIN OF THE HULEH—RAILWAY FROM HAIFA TO DAMASCUS—TEL EL KADI—BANIAS.

Almost immediately on arriving at Beyrout I met my friend and future fellow-traveller, Captain Owen Phibbs, who had resided for four years in the country, through which he had travelled extensively. He was thoroughly conversant with the language, and with the manners and habits of the natives, and his great experience subsequently proved invaluable. His love of oriental research, habit of close observation, and familiarity with the country generally, rendered him a most agreeable and instructive companion; and I was delighted

to find that he was free to undertake an expedition into a region which was new to him. He entered, moreover, warmly into the project which I had at heart, and which he considered to be both practicable and feasible; and his opinion inclined towards the country to the east of the Jordan as the part of Palestine where I should be most likely to find such a tract of waste land as I desired. We therefore decided, provided that it was found to be practicable, to cross the Jordan at its sources, and traverse the whole region formerly occupied by the half-tribe of Manasseh, Gad, and Reuben, and then, crossing over to Jerusalem, return northwards through western Palestine. We should thus have an opportunity of skirting the Belad Beshara, a district in the extreme north of western Palestine, comprised in ancient times within the heritage of Asher and Naphtali, now chiefly occupied by a Metawaly population, and which might prove worth examination.

I met no one at Beyrout who was personally acquainted with the Eastern country which we desired to traverse; and it was therefore not easy to obtain information—except from dragomans, who could not be relied upon—as to the present mood of the Arabs who range over it, and the possibility of traversing it in safety. The impression prevailed that this could only be accomplished by considerable payments in the shape of black-mail—

a tax which we did not feel by any means disposed to incur. The best chance of avoiding it seemed to be to travel in the humblest and most unostentatious manner possible, to take scarcely any money with us, to throw ourselves upon the hospitality of the natives, and to trust to the chapter of accidents and our appearance of poverty to carry us through safely. We therefore decided upon putting only a few pounds in our pockets, taking no tents, and instead of a dragoman, a domestic of Captain Phibbs's —who turned out a perfect treasure as cook and factotum — and one mule and muleteer for our united baggage, bedding, cooking utensils, and the articles of food which we thought it wise to take in case of necessity. These consisted of a few tins of preserved meat, some Liebig's Extract, tea, coffee, sugar, a ham, some cheese, cakes of chocolate, a bottle of olives, dates, &c. We also took a bottle of spirits of wine and a spirit-lamp, which we found to be the greatest possible comfort: a cup of hot tea, coming at the right moment, saves many a headache, if one is at all susceptible to the sun.

H.M. Consul-General, Mr Eldridge, very kindly supplied us with a circular letter addressed to Turkish authorities and officials generally, which insured us attention and civility whenever we came across them, and proved of great service to us.

After the usual amount of haggling, the agreement was at last signed for the price of the mule,

and a strong, active pony, for myself — Captain Phibbs's stable supplying the other two animals— and we started for Sidon in the early part of March. At the end of our first day's journey the muleteer pleaded so earnestly for an extra baggage-animal and boy to assist him and bear him company when we went too far ahead, that we added to our *cortège,* and ended by presenting a somewhat more wealthy and imposing appearance than we originally intended.

We were hospitably entertained at Sidon by Mr Abela, from whom we obtained a good deal of interesting information, which all went to show that there was very little to be expected from the Belad Beshara, where the land was not sufficiently rich, and the country too much occupied, to make it a desirable field for colonisation. We therefore gave up the idea of going as far south as Tibnin, the capital of the district, and decided on making Nabatiyeh the end of our first day's journey from Sidon, and continuing from there in an easterly direction.

Passing through productive gardens of orange, bananas, apricots, and olives, which surround the town, we debouched upon a fertile and extensive plain, stretching from the sea-shore to the base of the nearest range of hills, waving with young spring crops, which rows of Metawaly women were busily engaged in weeding; while the ruins of ancient

Sidon, which in former days extended for miles from the walls of the present city, bore testimony to the vastness of the population which the great Phœnician mart had attracted to its neighbourhood. Now, the fragments of columns which had once supported temples and palaces were either used as Moslem tombstones, as rollers for the flat house-tops, or lie strewn over the fields or by the side of the road to Tyre, which skirts the shore. We turned off from this to the left in about an hour after leaving Sidon, riding through fields of wheat and beans to the base of the ridge, where the cultivation ceased, and ascended the barren and somewhat rocky slopes, covered with small grey prickly bushes of *poterium*, until we reached the crest, from which a lovely coast-view was obtained, with Sidon embowered in gardens, and situated on a jutting promontory, in the distance. Traversing this range, which is of a chalk formation, we descended into the valley of the Zaherâni, or flowery vale, and crossed the stream by a ford. This valley was sparsely cultivated, but sustained its reputation in the matter of flowers, among the most abundant and beautiful of which were cyclamens of various hues, besides iris, asphodels, and anemones. Here the steeper ascent of the second range began, and when we reached its summit we stopped at the Khan Mohammed Ali for luncheon. From this point we obtained our last view of the

sea, and our first of Mount Hermon; while immediately above us, on our left, the Jebel Rihan reared its highest peak to an elevation of over 6000 feet. We now entered upon a very dreary, uninhabited, and uncultivated tract of country—indeed, we seemed to have left the population behind us when we left the coast; and from an agricultural point of view, there was nothing tempting in the district we were traversing.

Nabatiyeh was a dry uninviting-looking village, containing about two hundred houses inhabited by Metawalies, and thirty or forty by Christians: the latter lived in a quarter by themselves. The houses are built of blocks of stone a foot square, generally without cement, and large masses lie strewn about in all directions, so that it is altogether a hard rocky-looking place, giving one the feeling of living in a quarry. Nevertheless there is a square in the middle, surrounded by arched storehouses and granaries; and here every Sunday and Monday a fair is held. A fortnight before our arrival, the visitors at the fair, who camp out for the night between the Sunday and Monday, woke to find themselves in presence of an unusual and startling spectacle; and it still formed the staple topic of conversation in a village where events are rare. Hanging by the neck in the midst of them was a certain notorious character, by name Harab, a robber and murderer of some

celebrity. He was a Metawaly, a man who enjoyed some consideration among his own people, and inspired great terror among those who did not share his religious views. In consequence of the weakness of the central administration at Damascus, this man had been for long allowed to pursue his career of violence with impunity; but when Midhat Pasha assumed the reins of government, he determined to create a wholesome respect for law and order in the country by making a few examples. Therefore, when Harab shot a Druse, because some Metawaly women got alarmed at the presence of some Druses in their village, who were proved to have no evil intentions, Midhat Pasha hung him in the midst of his friends and relations; and the result was, that we were enabled to travel through a country not usually famed for its tranquillity, in peace and safety. Nevertheless there is a feud in consequence between the Metawalies and Druses—or rather, an old-standing quarrel has been exacerbated; but it will probably only simmer, and seems to be necessary as a sort of vent to let off superfluous steam.

We took up our quarters in the house of a certain Hadji Mousa, who spread quilts and mats for us on his mud-floor. The windows were on a level with it, and the doors are often made very small and low, so as to prevent tax-gatherers, *zaptiehs*, or other enemies, from stabling their horses

inside. After establishing ourselves here, and making arrangements for dinner, we went out to look about us, and scrape acquaintance with the people. We found the whole male population playing a game of ball in the square; but we were informed that they only represented a small proportion of what there should have been, as they had been drafted off in large numbers for the war, where they formed part of the regiments which had been sacrificed by Suleiman Pasha at the Shipka Pass, so that few were ever expected to return. We walked down to a fine spring which supplies the town with water, and which is full of sacred fish. Here were picturesque groups of Metawaly women, in the bright-coloured skirts which are a distinguishing characteristic of their attire, filling water-jars, and careless about covering their handsome faces beyond holding a corner of their veils in their mouths. They were, for the most part, tall and graceful in figure, and their carriage was perfect.

The Metawalies are much despised, and a good deal persecuted, by the Turks, on account of the heresy of their faith. They, like the Persians, are Shiites, but of a purer and more bigoted type. They are supposed by some to be the descendants of the aboriginal races formerly inhabiting Galilee of the Gentiles. In fact, they are, *par excellence*, *the* Gentiles, and still occupy in large numbers the extreme north of Palestine, which is called by the

modern name of Belad Beshara, and of which Tibnin, which was formerly the Metawaly capital, is the chief town. In the days of their comparative greatness this was the seat of their leading family, called the house of Ali es Sughir. According to the Shia doctrine, they assign to Ali, the son-in-law of Mohammed, a rank equal or even superior to that of the prophet himself, considering him an incarnation of the Deity, and believing in the divine mission of the Imaums descended from him. Mehdi, the last of these, is believed by them not to have died, but to be awaiting in concealment the coming of the last day. In common with some of the Sunnis, they do not consider this event very remote, the orthodox Moslem doctrine being that on that day Christ will reappear to establish El Islam as the religion of the world; with Him will reappear Mehdi, the twelfth Imaum—who will then be known by the name of "The Guide"—and Antichrist, or the beast of the earth; while the peoples of Gog and Magog — whom some suppose to be the Russians—will burst the barrier beyond which they were banished by Alexander the Great. The end of all things will begin with the trumpet-blasts of the angel Asrafil. The first of these blasts will kill every living being, a second will waken the dead. In regard to their final expectation of what is likely to happen to them, the Shiites and Sunnis do not seem to differ very materially, though they

are very bitter in respect of their difference of opinion as to the past.

I am indebted to Dr Wortabet of Beyrout, whose book on the religions of Syria is now unfortunately out of print, for the following particulars of some of the peculiar customs of the Metawalies: In prayer they perform their ablutions in a different way from the Mohammedans, using very little water. When they bow to the ground their heads are made to touch a small cake of earth, which they constantly carry with them for the purpose, made from the very spot where El Hosain, the son of Ali, and the Shiite martyr, was killed. If this cake happens to be lost, or not obtainable, they use a stone or some other material to remind them of the holy earth on which his blood was shed. Unlike the Moslems, each prays singly. At the hour of prayer all articles of clothing in which gold is wrought, and gold or silver rings and watches, are laid aside. Many of these rites and ceremonies are also practised by the Persian Shiites; but they have a remarkable form of marriage peculiar to themselves, which they call the "marriage of privilege." It is a legal and regular engagement, with the usual gift of dowry, but on the strange condition that the marriage tie shall continue for a specified time only—say a year or a month. When the stipulated term expires, the conjugal relation ceases absolutely, unless it be

renewed according to the ordinary and permanent form. The engagement takes place generally with a widow, the thing being impossible with a married woman whose husband is yet alive, and quite impossible with a virgin, who cannot be blind to the disadvantages of such an arrangement. When children are the fruit of such a marriage, the father is bound in every case to maintain them. They have also a form of nominal marriage, which they call the "engagement of interdiction." The proceedings are regular throughout, except the definite stipulation that the husband can have the privilege of only seeing his wife—the design of this being to gain free access to a young woman, and her immediate female relatives, in order to wait upon them, confer with them on matters of business, &c., which a stranger could not otherwise obtain. The nominal or interdicted wife can marry at any time without a permission or divorce from her *quondàm* husband. By these convenient modes of marriage, facilities are offered for a man and a widow to go together on a pilgrimage to Mecca, or some other travelling tour, at the termination of which the bond is dissolved; and so, when a man goes with a female who will not consent to be his wife of "privilege," the matter can be easily arranged by his nominal marriage with her daughter or mother. They avoid, however, these marriages as far as possible, in order to escape the sarcasm and odium of other sects—

especially the Mohammedans—on their way to the Holy Places.

In the course of our ramble we got into conversation with a Christian youth—or, to speak more accurately, a youth who professed the dogmas of the Melchite sect calling itself Christian. They are schismatics from the "orthodox" Greek Church, who joined the Church of Rome about a hundred years ago. They, however, still retain their independence in some particulars; they celebrate Mass in Arabic, administer the sacrament in both kinds, and their priests may be married men, though they may not marry after ordination. They are governed by a patriarch at Damascus, and to this sect belong the wealthiest and most aristocratic of the Christians. Our informant told us that all the Christians at Nabatiyeh were Melchites, and that they lived on terms of perfect harmony with the Metawalies; indeed, Christian sects as a rule, both in European and Asiatic Turkey, hate each other far more than they do the Mohammedans. At the same time, the Metawalies were very strict in protecting themselves against defilement, and are far more particular in this respect in their relations with Christians than Sunnis. For instance, they will not eat meat or bread or anything damp, or drink water that has been touched by a Christian. Our Melchite friend told us that if he asked for a drink from one of his Metawaly fellow-

townsmen, he was not allowed to take the pitcher by the handle or to touch the spout with his lips, but was compelled to hold it with both hands by the bottom, and then pour the water down his throat. The Metawalies do not allow the bread of the Gentiles to be baked in the same ovens which they use. They will not touch a stranger if his clothes happen to be wet with water, nor even allow him to enter their houses while in this state, except in cases of extreme urgency, and then often not without considerable difficulty. In eating with others, which they are sometimes compelled to do, they are careful not to eat from the same side of the plate; and after the meal is over, they purify themselves from the contracted defilement by pouring water over their mouths. If the Metawalies would only carry their principles of purification a little further, they would derive material, as well possibly as spiritual, benefits from it, for they are among the dirtiest and most squalid of religious sects in the East, and that is saying a good deal. The men have a particular way of shaving under the cheek-bone and chin, leaving the rest of the beard to grow. This, probably, has a religious origin, though their love of bright-coloured garments suggests that vanity may have something to do with it.

The Metawalies number about 80,000 souls, and are not by any means confined to this district. I came across their villages afterwards on the

eastern slopes of the Anti-Lebanon, to the north of Damascus, and they extend in that direction even as far as Homs. In former days, Baalbec was their principal town in the Buka'a, where they were governed by the family of Harafoost, notorious for their crimes as highwaymen. I have also seen their villages on the crests of the Lebanon, in the Maronite district; and everywhere they possess, in spite of the strictness with which they observe the rites and ceremonies of their religion, a most unenviable character as thieves and robbers. I asked my Christian friend why they were all playing ball instead of working, but he said that both Metawalies and Christians had no agricultural work on hand. They had planted their crops, and they had nothing to do now but idle and amuse themselves till it was time to reap them. He admitted that he himself had done no work of any sort for a month. The Metawalies feel a strong, secret dislike to the Turkish Government; and notwithstanding the outward professions of loyalty which they make, all their secret sympathies are with the Persians, to whose country they look as the stronghold of their religion and the bulwark of their faith. In the Belad Beshara, where we now were, they are governed by Beys of their own sect, by whom, however, they are treated in a very arbitrary manner, and without much regard to the laws of the land. All cases of civil law among them are settled, by

the sufferance of the Turkish Government, according to the principles of Shiite jurisprudence, for which they have lawyers of their own, and a Mufti appointed by the Governor of Beyrout. They believe that they have among them the veritable descendants of Hassan and Hosain, the sons of Ali. Both branches reside in the Belad Beshara, and the validity of their claims is recognised in Persia. These families wear the green turban, are extremely sanctimonious, and are treated with great respect by the Metawalies, out of veneration for their illustrious origin. Indeed, their most illustrious sheikh and spiritual chief was said to reside not far from Nabatiyeh.

Our beds on Hadji Mousa's mud-floor, though tolerably free from vermin, were not so soft and comfortable as to tempt us to prolong the night unnecessarily, and we had swallowed our coffee and were in the saddle shortly after daylight. In an hour and a half we reached the precipitous crest of the valley of the Litany, upon the edge of which, a few minutes to the right of the road, stands the old crusading castle of Belfort, a most picturesque and commanding feature of the scenery for miles round. The building is 130 yards long from north to south, and 33 yards wide. The walls are still standing, and average from 60 to 80 feet in height; they are built for upwards of 100 yards along the verge of a cliff, which rises quite perpendicularly from the bed of the

Litany, 1500 feet below. The castle itself is 2200 feet above the level of the sea, and can be approached only by a narrow ridge or neck from one direction, so that under the old conditions of warfare it was practically impregnable. Nevertheless Saladin, after a siege of a year, compelled the garrison, under Raynold of Sidon, to surrender. Other travellers have, however, described this ruin so fully, that I will spare the reader any further details.

We were now within the ancient limits of Palestine, and in territory which had been occupied by the tribe of Asher. Although the portion assigned to it extended far to the north along the crests of the Lebanon, they never seem actually to have possessed land much to the north of Nabatiyeh, which may have been one of the frontier towns; but the northern border of Palestine is extremely undefined, and it is difficult to determine what were the exact limits of Asher. The castle of Belfort is supposed by some to be the Achshaph mentioned in Joshua as one of the frontier towns. At all events, the Litany was the dividing line between Asher and Naphtali, and on crossing that stream we found ourselves in the heritage of the latter.

There are no means of scrambling down the precipitous crags upon which the castle of Belfort is perched, to the river, and even the circuitous road by which we descended to the bridge was steep enough to make walking more desirable than riding.

The view over the stupendous gorge through which the Litany forces its way to the sea, with Mount Hermon in the background, the southern spurs of the Lebanon and Jebel Rihan to the left, and the castle crowning the giddy height on the right, was magnificent; and it was a marvel to me that tourists on their way from Jerusalem to Damascus, should continue to wander on a beaten track, amid inferior scenery, when a day's journey from it would bring them to a spot where the grandest features of nature are so intimately blended with the associations of history and romance. The modern name of Belfort is Kalat esh Shekif; and we now left the district, or Belad esh Shekif, of which Nabatiyeh is the chief place, and crossed the Litany or "Accursed," now yellow and turbid, by a picturesque bridge—the Jisr el Khardeli. We turned sharp off to the right, from the principal road which leads to Hasbeya and Rasheya, and ascending the other side of the valley, crossed the ridge into the Merj Ayun, a level plain surrounded by hills, eight or ten miles long, and from three to four wide—at the period of our visit an unbroken expanse of wheat, beans, and lentils. It is one of the richest tracts of country in Syria, and was formerly cultivated by the tribe of Naphtali, and was then called Ijon. It was taken on two occasions, —first by Ben-hadad, King of Syria, at the instigation of Asa, King of Judah; and on the second occasion by Tiglath-pileser, King of Assyria. It is

now owned chiefly by Sidonians. On the western slope is situated the village of Jedeideh. We did not enter it, but I think I should have made an effort to do so had I known the peculiar characteristic of the inhabitants. Let any man who knows enough of Arabic to be independent of a dragoman, and who wants a guide, apply to the inhabitants of Jedeideh. They are the carriers of the country; and there is no remote hamlet in Palestine, and scarcely an Arab encampment to the east of the Jordan, at any rate on this side of the Derb el Hadj, with which they are not familiar. We were perpetually meeting them trudging behind their loaded mules, in parties of two or three, throughout our travels, and came at last to look upon "Jedeideh men" as a link with civilisation.

Skirting the southern edge of the Merj Ayun, we passed out of it at the Druse village of Metulleh. This, with the exception of two on Mount Carmel, is the most southerly settlement of the Druses, and was the scene a few years ago of a tragedy in which thirty persons were massacred, under circumstances not very creditable to the Government — who, it appears, feared at the time a Druse rising. The sheikh who was supposed to be the dangerous person, and whose capture was the object of the onslaught, however, effected his escape.

At this point a new and most enchanting view burst upon us. At our feet lay the plain of the

Huleh, looking far more fertile and productive than it really is, as much of it is marsh and waste land, that might, however, easily be reclaimed. But surrounded as it is with a girdle of noble mountains, with the blue and tranquil waters of Merom gleaming in the midst of a setting of richest green, and the Jordan winding away in the distance, as seen from the hills to the north, it is without doubt one of the most attractive views in Palestine. One can hardly wonder at the men of Dan, when they came upon it, being fascinated by the luxuriance of the landscape and its charm of position, and then and there deciding to oust the existing peasantry, and occupy as much of it themselves as had not been already appropriated by the tribe of Naphtali. I felt a longing to imitate their example; for there can be no question that if, instead of advancing upon it with six hundred men, and taking it by force, after the manner of the Danites, one approached it in the modern style of a joint-stock company (limited), and recompensed the present owners, keeping them as labourers, a most profitable speculation might be made out of the "Ard el Huleh." The lake itself, which was first sounded and surveyed by Mr M'Gregor in the Rob Roy canoe, has an average depth of only eleven feet, and is four miles long by three and a half wide. It might, together with the marshy plain above it, be easily drained; and a magnificent tract of country, nearly twenty miles

long by from five to six miles in width, abundantly watered by the upper affluents of the Jordan, might thus be brought into cultivation. It is only now occupied by some wandering Bedouins and the peasants of a few scattered villages on its margin. At present it is unhealthy, and at certain seasons of the year fever-stricken; but there can be no doubt that, with drainage and cultivation, it might be made as salubrious as any other part of the country. It would be on by far the most desirable line of railway from Damascus to the coast, and lies itself at an elevation of about 270 feet above the level of the sea. A railway from here to Haifa, by way of Tiberias and the plain of Esdraelon, might be constructed at a comparatively small cost, as it is almost a dead level the whole way; while the continuation to Damascus would only involve one engineering difficulty—that of carrying it from the plain of the Huleh to the plateau above Banias. The line, however, has recently been carefully surveyed by Mr Charles Austin, C.E., who considers it a very practicable route for a railway. There is, indeed, none other which can be compared with this for connecting the capital of Syria and the grain-producing region of the Hauran with Haifa or Acre, which is the present port of export. The greater part of the plain of Huleh is at the disposal of the Government, and the remainder could be obtained at a price far below its real value. Any railway company obtaining and reclaiming this

tract would be in possession of a property, after the railway was made, which would go far towards covering the original cost of the line.

Descending from Metulleh, we left the Christian village of Abil about a mile to our right. This was Abel of Beth-maachah, where Sheba was overtaken by Joab (2 Sam. xx. 14, 15), and the city was saved by the intervention of a wise woman, who pacified the besieger by throwing the head of his enemy to him over the wall. The inhabitants of the city in those days were so celebrated for their wisdom, that the saying, "Thou shalt surely ask counsel at Abel," had passed into a proverb. It is doubtless identical with the Abel-maim, or "the meadow on the waters," mentioned in 2 Chron. xvi. 4, as having suffered from the raids of the Syrian and Assyrian kings, and was a place of such importance that it was styled "a city and a mother in Israel."

We now made for the bridge of El Ghajar, which crosses the Hasbany, the northern tributary, and by some considered the chief source of the Jordan. My friend knew the country so well that, although we had no guide, we ventured on short cuts, and soon found ourselves in a Bedouin encampment, which we came upon unexpectedly, as it was concealed in a hollow. The country here was somewhat rough and uncultivated, and is used by the Arabs as grazing-ground for their sheep and camels. Buffalo are also

largely used in the plain of the Huleh for agricultural purposes. We found these Arabs, who are of the Ghawarini tribe, perfectly good-natured and peaceable, though they bear a somewhat doubtful reputation; and in the case of Mr M'Gregor, of Rob Roy celebrity, and more recently of an American lady and gentleman, whom they plundered in this immediate vicinity, they seem to have been unable to resist their lawless propensities. Crossing the Hasbany Jordan by the picturesque old bridge, we found ourselves in the territory of Dan, and in less than an hour after reached the Tel el Kadi, or mound which was the site of the ancient city of Dan. We rested under the shade of the magnificent tree which overhangs this source of the Jordan, and took a plunge and a swim in the fountain as it wells out of the earth with the volume of a full-grown stream. It was an interesting locality, as no doubt whatever hangs over its identity, and there is scarcely another spot in Palestine of equal antiquity of which the same can be said, for it dates far beyond the arrival of the children of Dan, with the idolatrous worship and somewhat irregular priesthood which they established here. We are informed that they called the name of the city Dan, after the name of Dan their father, who was born unto Israel. "Howbeit, the name of the city was Laish at the first:" but we find that, according to the Biblical chronology, it was called Dan five hundred years before this event; for

we are told that when Abram heard of the capture of Lot, "he armed his trained servants, born in his own house, three hundred and eighteen, and pursued them unto Dan." Moses, too, from the top of Mount Pisgah, was shown "all the land of Gilead unto Dan," fifty years prior to the capture of Laish by the Danites, and the consequent change of name.

The explanation of this apparent contradiction is probably to be found in the hypothesis that the Pentateuch was revised and partially rewritten after the establishment of the children of Israel in the Holy Land.

We were now on the beaten track of the tourist and traveller from Jerusalem to Damascus, and put up for the night at Banias, a spot full of historical association, but which has been too often and elaborately described to need any ample notice here. The ancient Cæsarea Philippi, it is supposed to have been the most northern point visited by Christ, and one in which He found Himself surrounded by the temples and shrines of an idolatrous worship most repulsive in its character; for here were celebrated the rites sacred to the god Pan, from which the city took its name: and, to judge by the extensive remains which still exist, and the records of its greatness and beauty, it must have been one of the most gorgeous centres of mythological superstition. The village, which seems almost buried among the ruins that surround it, is a poor squalid-looking place,

built partially with the huge carved blocks of stone which once adorned the walls of temples or palaces, while fragments of columns or their capitals are abundantly strewn around. We were kindly received by the old Sheikh Ismail; but unfortunately his hospitality was not limited to ourselves. First arrived a handsome Druse sheikh, apparently a great friend of our host's, for they embraced with great demonstrations of affection, and kissed each other on both cheeks. Then came a soldier, or rather a subordinate officer, who had been at Plevna, and who showed us with pride two bullet-holes in his leg. Then arrived three visitors of distinction from a distant village; and when night came we found, to our dismay, that they were all beginning to say their prayers and make their beds on the opposite side of the room we had fondly hoped had been placed exclusively at our disposal. Their idea of going to bed consisted simply of stretching themselves on the floor, throwing off their outside garment, and getting under a quilt; and they watched with some interest our more elaborate arrangements. As for sleep, it proved out of the question: each one of the five either snored, or moaned, or puffed, or talked in his sleep; and these noises, diversified with the incessant barking of dogs and a slight sprinkling of fleas, kept me awake, and indeed to some extent occupied, until the first streak of dawn war-

ranted me in waking my companion and rousing the household generally. An early start was the more necessary, for we were now about to dive into the wilderness beyond Jordan, and our information as to the number of hours it would take us to reach our night-quarters was somewhat vague.

CHAPTER II.

AIN FIT—AN ANSARIYEH VILLAGE—THE SHEIKH'S HOUSE—HIS RETICENCE—ORIGIN OF THE ANSARIYEH—THE FOUNDER OF THE SECT—THEIR RELIGIOUS TENETS—THEIR SOCIAL DIVISIONS—MARRIAGE AND OTHER CEREMONIES—JOURNEY TO KUNEITEREH—A CIRCASSIAN COLONY—KUNEITEREH—MEDJLISS AT THE CAIMAKAM'S—PRESENT CONDITION AND PROSPECTS OF THE CIRCASSIAN COLONISTS.

As far as Banias we had required no guide. Captain Phibbs was so intimately acquainted with the country, that we had not only found our way here without difficulty, but had even made the rash experiment of a short cut successfully. Now, however, we were getting into country rarely visited by any traveller, in regard to which there were the usual exaggerated stories of marauding Bedouins, of the necessity of an escort, and so forth. Fortunately, we had no dragoman to invent impossible dangers for the purpose of sharing the black-mail afterwards with the Arab chief, who is put up to demanding it—nor had we a long caravan of mules laden with tents and baggage, to tempt the needy nomade; but we jogged humbly and unostentatiously behind a guide we

picked up at Banias, who said he knew the way to Kuneitereh, followed by Hanna, our trusty cook, mounted on a bright little Arab, and the two muleteers riding their lightly-loaded animals.

We passed out of Banias by its southern gate—a massive and very handsome structure, on which is an Arabic inscription, though the walls are in fact very ancient—and crossed the brook of the Wady Za'areh by a stone bridge, which is also partly ancient, and in the walls of which were several granite columns, and followed a path a little to the east of south, which gradually began to ascend the range which forms the eastern side of the Jordan valley. We here left the territory of Dan, and entered that of the half-tribe of Manasseh. After a gradual ascent of an hour, we reached the Ansariyeh village of Ain Fit. As this was the only opportunity we should have of seeing any of the members of this remarkable sect, who for the most part inhabit the little-known mountains between Tripoli and Antioch, we determined to make a short halt here, and try to make acquaintance with some of the inhabitants. The village was so unutterably squalid, that it was difficult to determine by any external indication which was the abode of the sheikh or leading man. The streets were narrow lanes winding between low mud-walls that enclosed small courtyards containing hovels which were generally devoid of any apertures but a low door, and

a hole in the roof for the smoke to escape. The women were, as usual, collected round the spring, and carrying water-jars; the men were squatting in groups on their heels, where the lanes were wide enough to admit of their doing so, gossiping and staring vacantly at our cavalcade. They showed no inclination to be hospitable, and when we pulled up and dismounted, looked rather disgusted than otherwise. We forced our way, however, unabashed, into the courtyard that contained the two or three miserable huts which, we were informed, belonged to the sheikh; and fastening our horses—leaving them carefully watched, for the Ansariyeh are notorious pilferers—we almost forced the sheikh to appear and receive us, and invite us into his house. It consisted of a single windowless room, in which there was a small charcoal-fire and two threadbare carpets. In common decency, the sheikh was obliged to offer us coffee; but as he seemed rarely to indulge in that luxury, it had to be first roasted, then pounded, and then made. This was a long operation, and gave us the time we wanted to talk to him. As the Ansariyeh are prohibited by their religion from smoking, we could not return his civility by offering him tobacco. Two or three men of the village now came in, but suspicion and moroseness were the order of the day; and it was not to be wondered at, considering the extreme contempt in which the Ansariyeh are held, both by Mo-

hammedan and Christian, and the open manner in which the popular aversion is expressed. When we told our guide we wanted to stop in the village, he said, "What is the use of stopping among pigs, who don't fast, and don't pray, and have got no god?" Perhaps, also, the reticence of our host may have been caused by the presence of a Bedouin and a Druse, who happened to be in the village when we arrived, and whose curiosity tempted them to follow us into the hut. Under these circumstances the sheikh, when he did speak, seemed more inclined to ask than to answer questions. The first inquiry he made was whether we had brought our harems with us. This might possibly have been with a view to trade, for the Ansariyeh have no idea of a woman except as a marketable animal without a soul, and their marriages are all distinct sales for money down, and not indirect ones, as they so often are with us. However, he said nothing to our reply in the negative, but seemed for some time lost in thought at the anomaly of men wandering about alone without women, so that it is impossible to say what train of ideas prompted the question. Then he asked us if English soldiers were not on their way to Damascus. He said he had been told that they were expected to arrive there in a few days. We assured him that there was no truth in the statement; but it was evidently one which others had heard as well as the sheikh,

and several questions were put as to the probability of a British occupation of the country. The Druse seemed particularly interested, and the others remarked of him, that they considered him an Englishman. "Druses and English are the same as one," they said—an observation which the Druse evidently regarded as a compliment, and seemed by his manner to wish to make it apparent that his relations to us were different from those of the others; in fact, we felt rather patronised by him than otherwise. The sheikh told us that there were two other Ansariyeh villages in the immediate neighbourhood, and that the total population of the three amounted to about 1000 souls; that they had been settled in this part of the country for about 800 years, and did not keep up much intercourse with their coreligionists in the north of Syria. The presence of the others made it very difficult to do more than talk generalities; but under no circumstances would it have been possible to extract any information in regard to his religious belief, or even the social habits of the people. They are, if possible, more secret than the Druses in their mysticism, and to some extent profess Mohammedanism as a matter of convenience, and a cloak to conceal their real *culte*.

Some say that the Ansariyeh spring from the Carmathians, a mystic sect, who, after the death, in 323 of the Hegira, of Abou Tahir, their last great

chief, rapidly broke up, and soon ceased as a kingdom, the most fanatic of his followers taking refuge in the mountains now named after them; others, that they are a remnant of some of the old Canaanitish races that fled before Israel in the days of Joshua. They themselves advance, in proof of this origin, the fact that the name of Canaan is still so common among them, and that they have their traditions concerning Samaria, narrating that the Samaritans had found a refuge among them. The name of a Jew is exceeding hateful to them; while, notwithstanding the fact that Christianity so soon found a footing in Antioch, it seems never to have penetrated into the Ansariyeh mountains close by. There can be little doubt, from the difference of type that exists among them, that they are now of mixed race: they themselves have a tradition of an Eastern infusion, and I imagined that in the women's countenances especially I saw indications of Tartar blood. This was very slight, and their features were for the most part regular and Grecian, clearly distinguishable from the natives of the country. Some, however, in their northern mountains, are said to have negro features, and crisp, curly hair; but I did not see any specimens of these.

The Ansariyeh, according to Gregory, surnamed Bar Hebræus, and called in Arabic Abulfaradj, take their name from an old man who appeared in the year of the Hegira 270 (A.D. 891), in the region of

Akab (which Assemani, in his 'Bibliotheca Orientalis,' considers identical with Kufa), in a village which the inhabitants call Nazaria. This old man, called Nusair, probably after the village, appears to have been the son of a slave of Ali, the son of Abou Taleb. His son, Abou Shuaib, was the first great apostle, and was a pupil of Hassan il Askere, the father of the last Imaum, and the chief authority of the sect. Nusair himself declared he had seen Christ in a vision, and the formula in which he announces it runs as follows:[1] "I, such an one, commonly believed to be the son of Othman of the town of Nazaria, saw Christ, who is Jesus, who is also the Word, and the Director, and Ahmed the son of Mohammed, the son of Hemaphia, of the sons of Ali, the same also is the angel Gabriel; and he said to me, 'Thou art the Reader, thou art the Truth. Thou art the Camel that retainest anger against the infidels. Thou art the Heifer bearing the yoke of the believers. Thou art the Spirit. Thou art John, the son of Zacharias. Preach, therefore, to men that they kneel four times in their prayers —twice before sunrise, twice after sunset—toward Jerusalem, saying each time these three verses: God is sublime above all—God is high above all—God is the greatest of all. On the second and sixth festival let no man do any work; let them fast two days every year; let them abstain from Moham-

[1] Wortabet's Researches into the Religions of Syria.

medan ablution; let them not drink strong drink, but of wine as much as they please; let them not eat of the flesh of wild beasts.' Nazar then went to Palestine, where he infected the simple and rustic people with his absurd doctrines. Then departing, he hid himself; nor is his place known to this day." According to William of Tyre, he was imprisoned for spreading these doctrines; escaped, and attributed his escape to miraculous agency; chose twelve disciples, abolished circumcision and the observance of the Ramadan, and finally founded the mystical sect now called after him. Assemani gives the following account of this miraculous escape: The Governor of Kufa, hearing of his doctrines, "commanded to apprehend him; and having cast him into a dungeon in his own house, swore that on the following morning he would have him crucified. On the same night the governor, going to bed half intoxicated with wine, placed the key of the dungeon under his pillow: a maid of the household perceiving this, when he was fast asleep withdrew the key; and pitying this old man given to fasting and prayer, opened the dungeon, set him at liberty, and then restored the key to its former place. The governor, going in the morning to the dungeon, and opening it with the same key, and finding no person, imagined the culprit to have been miraculously removed; and as the maid, through fear, kept silence as to what she had done, the report spread abroad that the old man

had escaped from prison while the doors were shut. A short time after, having found two of his disciples in a distant country, he contrived to persuade them that he had been delivered by angels from the prison and conveyed to a desert place." I am indebted to Captain Phibbs, who had travelled over the northern part of Syria, and gained much information about the Ansariyeh, for the following particulars, none of which seem to have come to the knowledge of Mr Walpole, who, in his book on 'The Ansariyeh,' published in 1851, gives us absolutely no information in regard to their peculiar manners and customs, and the mysteries of their faith, though he seems to have spent some time among them, and professes to have penetrated all the secrets of their religion. Captain Phibbs was kind enough to place at my disposal his translation of an Arabic pamphlet by a native author, who apparently had exceptional means of becoming acquainted with the Ansariyeh belief. From this it would appear that the Ansariyeh are divided into four tribes: the Kelaziat, who worship the moon; the Shemaliat, or Northerns, who worship the host of heaven; the Ribyiat, who worship the air (evidently from a word meaning to know secret things or hidden mysteries); and the Mouwachesat, who worship the dawn. They all believe in the divinity of Ali, the son of Abou Taleb, and to him ascribe all the attributes of the Godhead. They also accept the doctrine of metempsychosis. Their religion fur-

ther consists in a knowledge of the mystery of A. M. S., the initial letters for Ali-Mohammed-Suleiman (the Persian), the same who is honoured by the Druses. These three are further called "the Meaning," "the Name," and "the Door,"—*i.e.*, Ali, All in All (the Meaning), was manifested in Mohammed (the Name), and made known by Suleiman (the Door). According to the tribe who worship the dawn, the sun is Ali; according to the Kelaziat, he is the moon. All the incarnations who have appeared on earth at various times have been different manifestations of the mystic Trinity.

Previously, the Ansariyeh lived in the Milky Way in the heavens, but failing in their adoration to Ali, were cast down to the earth. All their energies are now turned to getting back again there, and their ideas of the future life seem to have much in common with modern spiritualists. In fact, it would seem that the initiated are somewhat given to mediumship. Among them, as among the Druses, there are two classes — the initiated and the uninitiated. A service in which wine is drunk, and also poured on the ground, takes place on the initiation of a new member. Unlike the Druses, however, where women are constantly allowed to take the highest grade, women among the Ansariyeh are never admitted to religious meetings, though certain ceremonies in which they must of necessity bear a very important part, take place. These are

symbolical of the origin of man, and the productive powers of nature, which are highly honoured and considered sacred among them. In this they have much that was common to the Gnostics of the early Church, and, indeed, we are carried back by it to the earliest worship of which we have any record in this country—that of Baal and Ashtaroth. Their religious meetings take place in secret, at sacred tombs called Mazars, and are shrouded in mystery—falsehood and deception towards the outer world being inculcated and practised, so that, if circumstances require it, any other religion may for the time being be outwardly professed by them. Should any of their number divulge their mysteries, it is certain that he would be assassinated; and from this fact probably arises the name which has been popularly but erroneously bestowed upon them, of Assassins, which more properly belongs to the Ismailians or Hashishins, to whom, however, they are closely allied. That they are, in fact, an offshoot from the Druse sect, may be gathered from the following citation from the Druse Catechism:—

"How have the Ansariyeh separated themselves from the Unitarians [Druses], and abandoned the Unitarian religion?

"They have separated themselves in following the teaching of Nusair, who said he was the servant of our Lord, the Prince of true believers, who denied the divinity of one Lord Hakim, and made

profession of believing in the divinity of Ali, son of Abou Taleb."

The Ansariyeh celebrate the Christian rite of sacrament, as will appear from the following quotation from their Catechism :—

"*Q.* What is the great mystery of God?

"*A.* The flesh and the blood, of which Jesus has said, This is my flesh and my blood; eat and drink thereof, for it is eternal life.

"*Q.* What is the mystery of the faith of the Unitarians? What is the secret of secrets, and chief article of the true believers?

"*A.* It is the veiling of our Lord in light that is in the eye of the Sun, and His manifestation in His servant, Abd in Noor."[1]

The sheikhs among the Ansariyeh are equal in number almost to the Fellaheen or peasants, and play somewhat the same *rôle* as the Ukkuls among the Druses. They instruct the people in their religion, and preserve them from harm by providing

[1] Since the above was in type I have had an opportunity of consulting the very interesting and elaborate account given of the Ansariyeh and their religion by the late Rev. Mr Lyde, who resided for some time among them in their northern mountains ('The Asian Mystery,' by the Rev. Samuel Lyde). This is the best, and indeed only, analysis of their tenets which, so far as I am aware, has ever been given to the public, and in the main confirms the information furnished me by Captain Phibbs. The close connection which exists between the Ansariyeh and Druse religions is made very evident, and there can be no doubt that the esoteric character of both conceals a far higher theological system than is apparent to the uninitiated inquirer.

amulets and charms on which a verse of the Koran is written—"There is no power and strength but in God the most High, the Almighty. O Ali, the all-powerful One!" They are supposed to have the power of curing diseases and madness, and are supported by lands set apart in a manner similar to the Wakouf lands among the orthodox Moslems. Woe to any unfortunate peasant who does not bestow due honour upon them, or who should consult a physician without previously obtaining their permission: should he even speak a word against them, his life would be in danger. The sheikhs are distinguished by a white turban worn round their *tarboosh*, and called a *shasha*.

The second class is called the Mukkadameen. To them belong the rest of the land that is not set apart as Wakouf, and they exercise the chief authority—forests, lands, and houses all being under their control. They take all the produce, the peasant being barely allowed enough to keep body and soul together. They are invariably the perpetrators of all murders and highway robberies, or else share a part of the plunder; and in the event of the Government following up a thief or murderer, they afford him protection, and facilitate his escape if necessary. The Mukkadameen wear a *tarboosh* with a long, broad, and heavy tassel, a wide waist-belt of silk, and are never without arms of some sort.

The third class are the Fellaheen. They are no better than the slaves of the sheikhs and Mukkada-

meen, all the fruit of their labours being taken from them, so that in many instances they are barely clothed, and subsist on roots and wild herbs,—at best their heads are covered with a felt skull-cap, and their bodies with a long cotton shirt as their only garment, with a belt round the waist, of wool, hair, or leather. This, too, is the only dress of the peasant women, though among those we saw at Ain Fit some were clothed in long dresses of bright colours, and seemed tolerably well off. Their position socially, however, is degraded in the extreme, and it is said there is no race in the world by whom the women are worse treated than by the Ansariyeh.

On the birth of a female child, it is put aside in a corner of the house in a wicker-basket, and covered with a torn cloth, and there left unclothed, without nourishment, exposed, it may be, to the cold wind. Those who survive this treatment are naturally of a strong constitution, and capable of supporting the fatigue and privation they have to undergo for the rest of their lives. At an early age they are sent to carry water from the fountain, and take the goats out to pasture, or bring in a load of firewood. Curses and blows are all that a girl receives from her father and brothers; and this treatment continues till she is sought for as a wife, when she is sold for a sum varying from five to fifty pounds. No religious service takes place at marriage. The purchase-money having been paid, the bride is brought to the bride-

groom's house by her family and friends. He with his friends await her approach, and mounting the roof of the house as the bride enters the doorway, he strikes her two blows, one on the right side, and the other on the left, as a foretaste of what she is to expect if disobedient, and as a proof of her being under his subjection.

If the marriage takes place among the peasants, a tenth of the money paid by the bridegroom goes to the chief or Mukkadam of the district: even should the marriage take place at a distance, the money has still to be paid to the Mukkadam of the district where the bride was born. No woman can inherit anything in the way of land, money, or goods on the death of her husband or any relative. She is looked upon merely as a means of production, and for service in the house. It is not lawful to instruct her in religion, excepting in one short prayer, the words of which convey no meaning: for the Ansariyeh say that woman is of the seed of Satan the accursed, the enemy of God, and to reveal to her the secret of their faith would be the same as to reveal it to Satan; and any man among them who attempts to instruct a woman is considered an arch-enemy and opponent of the Almighty.

Burial takes place immediately on decease, at times even before the body has ceased to breathe. Bread is then broken and eaten over the new-made grave; and seven days afterwards, the nearest relation of the

deceased has to provide a feast for all comers. If too poor, his relatives and neighbours assist with provisions, and much firing of guns and beating of drums goes on. As the soul is supposed to leave the body by the mouth, that is kept open with great care; and in case of criminals in the hands of the authorities, sentenced to be hung, their friends have been known to beg as a great favour that they might be impaled instead.

In the event of lawsuits, they never appeal to the Government, but invariably settle them among themselves—an appeal to the Mukkadam or chief being final; but that being costly, they prefer calling in arbitrators among themselves.

The Ansariyeh are lazy and talkative, excepting about matters concerning their faith, indiscretion in regard to which they visit with severe punishment—as in the case of Soloman the Adanite, author of the work on their religion, after he became a Protestant, who, having imprudently ventured to return to the neighbourhood of his own town, Adana, speedily came to an untimely end.

Every sort of subterfuge is resorted to by the Ansariyeh to avoid the conscription, in which they in a great measure succeed, through bribes given to the returning officer.

In their own mountains, the different tribes and villages are constantly fighting among themselves; and these quarrels involve a great destruction of

crops and other property, thus increasing the general misery and poverty which characterise the race. Their total number is estimated at 200,000 souls.

It is worthy of notice that, in the year A.D. 1128, the castle and town of Banias, and the surrounding country, fell into the hands of the kindred sect of Ismailians or Assassins, as the Ansariyeh are often also called, and became the centre of their power in Syria, until they transferred it, twelve years later, to Massiat. At this time they entered into an alliance with the Crusaders, under Rainier de Brus, for the capture of Damascus, during which Ismail, the Grand Prior of the Assassins, handed the castle of Banias over to the Christian knight—retaking it three years later, however, when Rainier de Brus with his soldiery lay before Joppa with the King of Jerusalem. What amount of fusion existed at that date between the Ismailians and the Ansariyeh it is difficult to determine, but it is a singular circumstance that, according to the tradition which we received from the sheikh of Ain Fit, they had occupied these villages 800 years; and it is not, therefore, impossible that they were the remnant of the Assassins with whom Rainier de Brus made the unholy compact which resulted in such dire disaster to the Crusaders, on the occasion of their attempt to capture Damascus.

One of the other Ansariyeh villages was quite close to Ain Fit, perched just above it, and both were surrounded by fairly cultivated fields and gar-

dens. As we ascended above them, we found ourselves amongst scrub oak, and looked back over the plain of the Huleh, with the village of Banias at our feet, and the majestic ruins of the huge old castle of Subeibeh crowning a conical hill. Originally, doubtless, a stronghold of the Phœnicians, it became in turn a fortress of the Ismailians and the Crusaders, and is the most massive and complete ruin of the kind in Syria. Above all towered snow-clad Hermon. Beyond the Huleh, the mountains of Galilee closed the prospect, with Jebel Jermak in the distance. The ruins of the crusading castle of Hunin were visible on the opposing ridge, and away to the right the fortress of Belfort reared its lofty walls on the cliff above the Litany. In old days it was said that whoever held the castles of Banias, Hunin, Belfort, and Tibnin, was master of the whole country. From our present position Tibnin was the only one not visible; but it was easy to see how completely the fertile plains at our feet were at the mercy of the garrisons of these formidable strongholds, and how difficult they would be of invasion by a foreign enemy. There were traces of an old Roman road which must have connected Banias—or, as it was then called, Paneas—with the cities of the Jaulanitis, the district we were now entering; and I observed several old cisterns of considerable size, some of the masonry of which was still intact.

At last we reached the summit of the ridge, where

the woods of Valonia oak gave way to grassy plains; and in the distance, not far to the right, we observed the principal encampment of the Fudl Arabs—an important tribe, numbering 2000 fighting men, who make these their grazing-grounds, and are celebrated for their prowess in war. We were now at an elevation of about 3000 feet above the level of the sea, and on our right was a range of conical basaltic peaks averaging from 500 to 1000 feet in height, running in a due north and south direction, and known as the Jebel Hesh. Some of these are wooded on their western slopes with prickly oak and terebinth, and others are high conical grassy mounds. Altogether, the country presented an entirely different character from that to the west of the Jordan. At some distance on our left were the lower spurs of Hermon, which finally flatten out into this elevated grass plateau. With the exception of the Arab encampment, we saw no people or habitations for about four hours after leaving the Ansariyeh village; then we came upon a number of camels grazing, with camel-cloths to protect them from the cold, and looking altogether very different animals from the miserable specimens we had seen at Nabatiyeh, the half-starved property of the Metawaly. The herdsman in charge of these told us that we were close to a settlement of Circassian emigrants; and shortly after, we found ourselves in the midst of a scene of an altogether novel character. About 300 Circassians

were busily engaged in the first stage of building a village for themselves. They had chosen a site which had evidently been that of a town at some former time, for large square blocks of stone were abundant. Those who had not succeeded in getting a roof over their heads were temporarily sheltered by roughly improvised tents, and all were hard at work making a new home for themselves. They were a fraction of a large importation from Bulgaria, now at Kuneitereh, and most of them came from the neighbourhood of Widdin. In fact, it is not improbable that many of them took some share in the "atrocities." They were quite amiable so far as we were concerned, but were too busy to bestow very much attention upon us, and their residence in Bulgaria had accustomed them to the sight of specimens of Western civilisation, so that we were no novelty. The women and children were hoeing and weeding in the newly-made gardens. The men were either hauling stone in creaking *arabas* drawn by bullocks—a sight which must have been altogether new to the neighbouring Bedouins, who had never seen a wheeled vehicle in their lives—or were building the walls of the houses. They were under the management of a chief, who was too busily engaged in a discussion with an Arab to honour us with much of his notice, so we sat under a half-built wall to discuss our luncheon, and look on at this interesting experiment in colonisation.

We rode for an hour more over the vast plain

before we arrived at Kuneitereh, and were passed on the way by a most picturesque Bedouin sheikh with poised lance, and *kufeiheh* streaming in the wind, as he urged his thorough-bred little Arab to his full speed. He was bound to our destination, and we pulled up shortly after him at the door of the massive stone building which formed the residence of the Caimakam; for Kuneitereh, though a wretched collection of stone huts, is the *chef lieu* of a district, and derived additional importance from the Circassian immigration, of which it was the headquarters. It stands in the centre of a grassy plain or steppe, on which no trees are visible, but which is sufficiently well watered to be capable of sustaining a large population. Burckhardt describes Kuneitereh in his day as being surrounded by a strong wall, containing within its circuit a good *khan* and a fine mosque, with several short columns of grey granite. Within the last sixty years the wall, the *khan*, and the mosque have all disappeared, and the place has been abandoned until a few months before our arrival, when 3000 Circassians arrived to people it. On the north side of the village are the remains of an ancient city—perhaps Canatha—but the ruins consist of little more than foundations. The Caimakam's house had been recently built, and contained all the Government offices, such as they were. The lower storey was inhabited by horses and Circassians, who all camped together in one spacious sort

of cellar. The upper was approached from without by a flight of stone steps, leading to a terrace, upon which opened the various rooms. These were dark and dirty, and innocent of any furniture excepting mats and quilts, with now and then a very untempting bed. The Caimakam was a small, sinister-looking Turk, rather of the old school; but he received us with great cordiality, and insisted upon our taking the seats of honour by his side while he presided over the Medjliss which was sitting at the time. The occasion was a most interesting one, and I was glad of the opportunity of seeing the administrative system in operation under such peculiar circumstances. Occupying by virtue of his rank the highest place, was the celebrated chief Hassan Faour, Emir of the Fudl, a very handsome man of between fifty and sixty years of age, with a Jewish type of countenance, and great dignity of manner. Next to him came the Sheikh Mousa, the chief of a tribe of Turcoman Arabs who have found their way, at some former period, from their Eastern home, probably in the neighbourhood of the Caspian, to the eastern bank of the Jordan. I was sorry I had no opportunity of finding out from the sheikh something of the history of his tribe. He was a man with a very intelligent expression of countenance, and delicate and pleasing features, and rules over a thousand fighting men. Though he spoke Arabic, the tribe retains its own dialect of Turkish. Then came in,

with no small swagger, the Arab who had galloped past us half an hour before, and who turned out to be no less a person than Sheikh Awad al Ahmed, the sheikh of the Naïm, the most celebrated among all the Arabs of this region for his valour in the field, and who rules over 4000 fighting men. There were two or three other Arab chiefs of minor importance, and opposite to them on our other side sat a group of Druses with their sheikh, who came from the village of Mejdel es Shems to protest to the local Medjliss against a requisition of charcoal which had been levied upon the Druse population of Mejdel es Shems by the governor or Mutessarif of the province, resident at Sheikh Sa'ad. There seemed to be a good deal of sympathy manifested with the Druses, but politeness did not warrant our staying to the end of the discussion, so I don't know how it terminated; but the fact that three or four Arab chiefs should leave their tents to come and take part in a council presided over by a Turkish official, to entertain a grievance of Druse peasantry against the governor of the province, was significant in many ways. It is a distinct indication of a sedentary tendency on the part of the Arabs, and of their recognition of the advantages of a settled system of government. It is evident that when the chiefs of the tribes become members of the local councils for administering the country, they are to a great extent pledged to good behaviour, while it must add very

considerably to their sense of personal importance to exercise functions which invest them with the character of referees or arbitrators in matters of dispute between the governor of a province and the Druses. They regarded us with an interest which we fully returned, and made sundry little complimentary speeches during pauses in the discussiòn. Then, under the guidance of the Caimakam's secretary, we went off to inspect our sleeping accommodation, which turned out to be none other than the bedroom of that functionary himself, which he vacated for us.

The day was yet young, so we went out to investigate the village and its Circassian occupants, for there was no native population apart from these. We paid a visit to Ismail Agha, their head man, and found him a most pleasing and intelligent person. When he found that I had not only been in Circassia, but actually knew his native valley, he became quite demonstrative in his expressions of goodwill, and I only regretted that my Turkish was so limited that the interchange of ideas was attended with difficulty. He had been six years a prisoner with the Russians, and spoke Russian fluently. He also spoke Turkish, Circassian of course, and a little Arabic. He delighted to talk of his native mountains, but spoke sadly of his expatriation and the fate of his countrymen, allowed no rest, but ejected in a wholesale manner, first from Russia to European Turkey, and now from Bulgaria to Syria. The Circassians have

such an evil reputation, that to undertake their defence, even with the Turks, is an ungrateful task; but I know few races who possess such noble qualities, though they have been subjected to experiences which have tried them beyond their power of endurance. It is probable, if a few Highland clans had been dotted about the southern counties of England a hundred and fifty years ago, and told to provide for themselves, that their former habits of life, combined with the absence of any sufficient means of subsistence provided for them by Government, would have resulted in their taking what did not belong to them.

The chronic condition of warfare in which the Circassians had always lived, engaged in a lifelong struggle for independence against an overpowering enemy, developed in them sanguinary instincts, to which, in fact, they owe their successful resistance during so many years; while the methods by which the Russians conducted the war were precisely those which they were themselves accused of using in Bulgaria. The severity of the order of the Russian general commanding in Circassia, immediately prior to the Crimean war, is matter of history; and the people could not therefore know the extent to which they were outraging civilised instincts by following the example of their Christian enemies. There can be no doubt that the exasperation following their conquest and expatriation, their extreme poverty and

distress, and the close contact into which they were brought in Bulgaria with people of the same race and religion as their hated and traditional foes, proved a combination of influences more powerful than a high-spirited and almost totally uncivilised people could resist; but they are capable of the strongest personal attachments, and of the most generous and chivalrous instincts. If their ideas as to the value of life and the sacredness of property differ in degree from those of Europe, it is not because by nature they are greater murderers and plunderers than other people, but because they have lived under circumstances which made murder and robbery the necessary conditions to their existence.

Ismael Agha said that there were altogether about 3000 Circassians in Kuneitereh and its vicinity, who, although they had only been there a few months, were already establishing themselves in comparative comfort. They were grouped in seven villages, all of which they had themselves built, and had brought enough property with them to purchase a few cattle, so that they were not in absolute want, though some of them were very poor. The Government was still supplying scantily the necessities of those who needed it; but it is evident that a Government whose resources are not sufficient to buy food for its own army, cannot do much to feed scores of thousands of Circassian and Moslem refugees from all parts of

European Turkey. The chief expressed himself tolerably well satisfied with his new location. In the first place, there were no neighbours, and there was therefore no temptation to plunder. In the whole district of Jaulan, which, it is said, once contained three hundred villages, only ten now remain, and these afforded no great stimulus to predatory propensities; the others had all been abandoned in consequence of Arab raids. The presence of the Circassians did not, therefore, inspire the inhabitants, accustomed to live in terror of the Arabs, with any additional feeling of insecurity, but rather the contrary. The Circassians, being a sedentary people, and having property to protect, might be expected to make common cause with them against the Arabs. These latter were, however, being rapidly reduced to order; and, indeed, the tribes most feared were not those inhabiting the Jaulan, but those which made incursions into this rich pastoral country from the eastern deserts. As it is, this region could sustain ten times its present population; and in ancient days, when it contained, according to Porter, 127 cities, the sites of many of which still remain, the population must have been comparatively dense. There should be no reason therefore, why, if the Circassians are left undisturbed, they should not prosper. Unfortunately, they are so much more accustomed to fight than to work, that some time will probably elapse before they acquire habits of industry; while they

still, to a certain extent, regard their daughters as a legitimate source of revenue. Neither parents nor children have any objection to marriage or servitude under these conditions; and there can be no doubt that the fact that they are always able to dispose of their children to wealthy Turks, has provided them with a means of averting the pressure of famine by reducing their families, and obtaining money for those who were left. At the same time, it is a great question whether, considering the difficulties with which they have to contend, their natural improvidence and idleness, and the great disproportion of male to female children, in consequence of the sale of the latter, the race is likely to exist much longer as a distinct people.

We wandered afterwards through the village, consisting of about a hundred small stone huts; and everywhere the Circassians whom we met seemed kindly disposed, and ever ready to gossip. Even though their costume was generally more or less in rags, there is a *chic* about it which remained among the tatters. Their bearing was as proud and independent as if the magazines they carry on their breasts were still supplied with ammunition—as if their girdles were still garnished with the handsome daggers of old, now long since sold for bread, and the rifle with its hairy cover was still swinging at their backs. Their small feet, once cased in the neatest of red leather buskins, were now often bare,

and their head-gear improvised; but none would ever condescend to wear the red fez. Yet, with all this, their swagger was undiminished. Their fair complexions, blue eyes, and red beards, seemed to establish a sort of kinship with our own race; and in the manly and somewhat defiant expression of their handsome faces, it was impossible not to feel that there was something sympathetic.

We had a discussion afterwards with the Caimakam's secretary as to the relative prowess in war of Druses, Circassians, and Bedouins. He gave the palm decidedly to the latter, and placed the Circassians last. I should have thought that between Druses and Circassians it would have been hard to choose, but that either race would prove more than a match for the same number of Bedouins. I am aware that Circassians do not, as a rule, distinguish themselves as an irregular force attached to a regular army, and my own personal observations during a campaign with the Turkish army in the Caucasus in 1855 were entirely to this effect; but they are under no discipline, and are never supplied with rations. They naturally, under these circumstances, do not think of anything but plunder, and they trust to the army to do the fighting, in which, when their own homesteads are not in question, they do not feel especially interested. But they have performed feats of valour in the guerilla warfare of their own mountains which equal anything in the history of the Highlands of Scotland or of the Alps.

CHAPTER III.

JAULAN—JEDUR—THE LEJAH—ITS IMPREGNABILITY AND STRATEGICAL IMPORTANCE—WE LOSE OUR WAY—ASCENT OF TEL EL FARIS—MAGNIFICENT VIEW—FIK, THE ANCIENT APHEK AND HIPPOS—THE COMING OF ANTICHRIST, AND END OF THE WORLD, ACCORDING TO THE KORAN—TSEIL—THE MONASTERY AND TOMB OF JOB—THE LAND OF UZ—THE WORSHIP OF BAAL AND ASHERAH—THE SITES OF ASHTAROTH AND ASHTAROTH CARNAIM.

JAULAN takes its name from the Golan of Scripture —its chief city in early days—in regard to which we are informed that "unto the children of Gershon, of the families of the Levites, out of the other half tribe of Manasseh, they gave Golan in Bashan with her suburbs, to be a city of refuge for the slayer." The site of the city has never been satisfactorily identified: the district of which it was the centre formed part of Perea, and belonged at the time of Christ to the tetrarchy of Philip, the brother of Herod. The remaining cities of Jaulan of which we have any record were Hippos, Gamala, Bethsaida, Seleucia, and Sogane. Of these, only Gamala and Bethsaida have been identified. The province extends southwards as far as the Yarmuk or Sheriat

El Mandur, the ancient Hieromax, and was one of the old divisions of the land of Bashan, the other three being Trachonitis, Auranitis, and Batanea.

Intervening between Jaulan and the volcanic region of Trachonitis, and running south-eastwards from Kuneitereh and the eastern slopes of Hermon, is the district of Jedur. It takes its name from Jetur, the son of Ishmael, and was subsequently known as Ituræa. Standing on the terrace of the Caimakam's house, we looked over the plains upon which "the sons of Reuben, and the Gadites, and half the tribe of Manasseh, of valiant men, men able to bear buckler and sword, and to shoot with bow, and skilful in war, forty and four thousand seven hundred and threescore, made war with the Hagarites, with Jetur, and Nephish, and Nodab," and took as spoils 50,000 camels, 250,000 sheep, 2000 asses, and 100,000 men—a booty which conveys some idea of the material wealth of the country and its population in those days.

The last conflict which took place on the borders of Ituræa was one of a very different nature. About thirty miles distant from Kuneitereh, and intervening between the plain of Ituræa and the mountains of Bashan or Jebel Druse, lies that remarkable bed of black basalt called by the Romans Trachonitis, which some believe to be the Argob of the Bible—though that is by no means satisfactorily established—and nowadays known as

the Lejah. Elevated about twenty feet above the plain, it is a labyrinth of clefts and crevasses in the rock, formed by volcanic action; and owing to its impenetrable condition, it has become a place of refuge for outlaws and turbulent characters, who make it a sort of cave of Adullam. The Government of the Porte is unable to exercise any authority here, and its inhabitants know no law but their own. A large proportion of these are Druses, who use the place as a stronghold to resist the conscription, or any exactions of the Turkish Government to which they object. It is, in fact, an impregnable natural fortress, about twenty miles in length by fifteen in breadth; and when Ibrahim Pasha of Egypt held this country in 1835, he determined to bring it into subjection. Its garrison consisted of 800 Druses. The Egyptian army surrounded the Lejah, and occasionally succeeded in penetrating a short way into it; but after a siege of eleven months, during which Ibrahim Pasha lost 25,000 men, he was compelled to draw off his troops and acknowledge himself vanquished by the invincible 800. Some years afterwards, Mehemet Kuprisli Pasha attempted to enforce the conscription on the Druses of the Lejah with an army of 13,000 men, but was resisted by between 400 and 500 Druses at the south-west angle, and compelled to retire with a great loss of men and some cannon. Since our visit to this neighbourhood, Midhat Pasha has become involved in a

dispute with the Druses of the Lejah, against whom he sent a force of 5000 men. The matter was only arranged after a sharp fight in which 300 men were killed and wounded, when a compromise was effected, through the mediation of the chief Druse chiefs of the Lebanon; and I see that the Turkish Government have recently had the good sense to select a Druse sheikh to be appointed the local Caimakam, instead of, as heretofore, a Turk, often ignorant of the language, and of the peculiar conditions with which he had to deal. It would be a great improvement in the administration if prominent men of the locality were more often appointed local authorities, instead of corrupt and ignorant functionaries being sent from Constantinople. The importance of the Lejah as a strategical point, and of the Druses as its defenders in case of an invasion from the north-east, should not be overlooked.

We now proposed to traverse the plains of Jaulan, for the purpose of inspecting their pastoral resources, and exploring a tract of which no very definite account exists. As a guide, the Caimakam gave us a Kurdish *zaptieh*, who was supposed to know the way to Sheikh Sa'ad, which was our objective point.

The sun rose brilliantly on the morning of our start, but an ominous bank of clouds resting just above the horizon, warned us that its splendour was likely to be of short duration; and we had

scarcely got under way when a driving mist swept down upon us, and almost induced us to abandon our journey for the day. Our first glimpse of the sun, however, gave us confidence in its power ultimately to disperse the clouds, and we pressed on. To the right, the grassy conical hill of Tulûl Surnam rose to a height of 600 or 700 feet above the plain; and skirting its base, we reached in about an hour an embryo Circassian village, the most southerly of the seven. A biting cold wind whistled down upon us from the snows of Hermon, and there was a slight suspicion of hoar-frost on the ground. So far, the path had been well worn and easy to find; but after leaving the Circassian village, the fog thickened, and the path diminished in size, until at last we lost it altogether, and wandered helplessly in the mist. Luckily the country was flat and open, so that there was nothing to prevent our going in any direction we liked, and we were enabled to make some use of our compass; but it was a great disappointment to find ourselves traversing an entirely new country without being able to see anything of it beyond a radius of fifty yards.

That we were often wading knee-deep in the most luxuriant herbage, that we frequently crossed clear little brooks bubbling among the stones, that we sometimes were scrambling over what seemed ancient lava-beds, that now and then we went down

into grassy hollows from which we climbed out up steep stony sides,—so much we knew; but whether we were passing within a few yards of the ruins of some of the 127 cities that are strewn over the country, whether we were near large Arab encampments, whether the country was all grass and stone, or whether there might be wood to be seen in some directions, and how the hills looked which we knew were to our right,—all these were matters which sorely tried our tempers and imaginations. Our Kurdish *zaptieh* was absolutely obtuse when anything like information was concerned, and our efforts to get anything out of him only tried our patience still more.

At last we heard the barking of a dog and the bleating of sheep, and following the sound, came upon a Bedouin shepherd sitting on a rock, and looming through the mist like an Eastern idol. He was tending a flock of black-faced, fat-tailed sheep. We asked him to take us to the nearest tents, which we found were only a few yards off. These were only three or four in number; most of the men were away, and the women were busy making *semen*. This is a preparation of milk first boiled, then hung, then churned in a sheep-skin by women, who suspend it to a stick, and then keep pulling it to and fro until it attains the consistency of clarified butter, when it is exported to all parts of Syria to be used for cooking purposes, instead of oil, fresh butter, or

grease. There is quite an extensive business in *semen* between the Bedouins and the settled population of the west, and a large trade is done with the Desert, chiefly by Jedeideh men, who go laden with coffee, powder, cloths, and other articles needed by the Arabs, and come back with *semen*. The Arabs of Jaulan and Jedur own extensive flocks of camels, cattle, and sheep, and the Kurds come here with large droves of horses, destined for Syria, Egypt, and the west generally. They remain on these grazing-lands until the condition of their horses is thoroughly restored after their journey, and then they either drive them on into Palestine, or sell them to traders who come here to buy them.

After some little parleying, we persuaded an Arab to guide us to Tel el Faris, the most southerly peak of the Jebel Hesh range, which we intended to ascend if, by the time we reached it, the weather had cleared. He led us with Arab instinct through the mist till mid-day, when, to our intense relief, it cleared, and we found ourselves at the foot of the hill. We had now no further need of his services, so we dismissed him, lunched, and mounted our steeds for the ascent. Tel el Faris is the crater of an extinct volcano, rising some 700 or 800 feet above the plain, which is here about 2700 feet above the sea, or about 400 feet below its level at Kuneitereh. We were not long in pushing our steeds up the steep grassy slope, until, near the top, we found it more to

our minds to dismount and lead them round the rim of the crater on the summit. It was so narrow that, with a high wind blowing, we almost found a disposition to giddiness. At one point where it flattened out a little was a small Arab cemetery; and we disturbed a jackal engaged on a skull, from which it would appear that it is still occasionally used. The view from this point comprised the whole territory once ruled over by Og, the King of Bashan, and was most interesting. In all directions the eye ranged over a vast expanse of well-watered plain and pasture-land, in places abundantly strewn with basaltic rocks, but still capable of sustaining countless flocks and herds. At the base of the cone was one of the few villages still existing in Jaulan, surrounded by a very considerable tract of cultivated land.

To the south the steppe stretched away till it was cleft by the winding gorges of the Yarmuk, beyond which the country became undulating and wooded, terminating in the lofty range of the Jebel Ajlun, or the mountains of Gilead. To the south-east and east extended the vast corn-growing plains of Hauran, bounded in their turn by the "hills of Bashan" and the Jebel Druse, now the home of three-fourths of the Druse race, on the plains to the south of which the Israelites found sixty cities with fortified walls and gates. To the north-east, we looked over the pasture-plains of Ituræa, with the

solitary conical hill of Tel el Hara rising from the midst of them, and forming a conspicuous landmark. In this direction the prospect was bounded by the low range of the Jebel el Mania, thirty miles beyond which lay the city of Damascus. Walking round our crater, and looking north, we could now see the character of the country we had traversed in the fog—a brilliantly green expanse dotted with patches of basaltic rock, with Mount Hermon in the far distance, and, more to the west, the volcanic range of El Hesh, still shrouded in clouds, which also hung over the valley of the upper Jordan.

But the most interesting view of all was to the south-west. In this direction the plain was so rocky as in places almost to give it the appearance of a desert. It extended for nearly twenty miles, and terminated abruptly in the precipitous shores of the Lake of Tiberias, its blue waters sparkling in the sun, and behind them the irregular outline of the mountains of Palestine closed the prospect. It was on this plain that the King of Syria met the Israelites, when he was told by his servants that the gods of Israel were the gods of the hills, because they had previously beaten the Syrians at Samaria; but, said they, "let us fight against them in the plain, and surely we shall be stronger than they." So they chose this plain, and "went up to Aphek, to fight against Israel." Aphek is the modern Fik. We could see through our glasses the small collection of

stone huts, scarcely distinguishable from the rest of the stones by which it was surrounded, and which form the present village. Here "the children of Israel pitched before them like two little flocks of kids, but the Syrians filled the country." After the slaughter of 100,000 Syrians, the remainder took refuge in Aphek, where a wall fell upon the 27,000 that were left.

The plateau extending from Fik to the Yarmuk on the south, and the Lake of Tiberias on the west, is described by Mr Merill, of the American Survey, as "generally level, extremely fertile, and, taken together, forming one of the finest wheat-fields in Syria. The soil is of a reddish colour, and quite free from stones." At Fik, which Mr Merill visited, and believes to be identical with Hippos, he found extensive ruins which deserve to be thoroughly examined. He says, "Columns and ornamental work abound, and there are some elegant stone doors, and some Cufic inscriptions." Gamala is, according to Mr Merill, only forty-five minutes distant from Fik; and here he describes the ruins as being more extensive than at any other place which he had visited east of the Jordan: "Ionic, Doric, and Corinthian capitals; marble, granite, and basalt columns; ornamental work of considerable variety; walls, towers, public and private buildings,—all fallen into confusion together."[1] Burckhardt travelled across the plain from

[1] Palestine Exploration Society. Fourth Statement. January 1877: New York.

Fik past the base of Tel el Faris, and so on to Tseil, the village to which we were bound, and gives a most careful description of the ruins he passed. He believes the plain of Fik to be the ancient Argob. No modern traveller seems to have followed this route since.

According to Mohammedan belief, the plain of Fik may yet be the scene of an encounter pregnant with far more vital consequences to humanity than that between the Syrians and Israelites; for it is one of the "greater signs" of the approach of the end of the world, and of the resurrection, that Jesus shall appear again on earth—according to some, at the white tower near Damascus, and according to others, near a rock named Afik—with a lance in His hand, wherewith to kill Antichrist.[1] The country immediately round the present Fik is such a mass of rock that one can scarcely doubt that this is the spot indicated.

Although the belief of Moslems in regard to the end of the world and the final judgment is no mystery to any one who takes the trouble to look for it in the Koran, it seems to be so little known generally, that I may perhaps be excused for alluding to it more fully. In the forty-third chapter of the Koran, entitled "The Ornaments of Gold," Mohammed says, "And He [Jesus] shall be a sign of the approach of the last hour, whereof doubt not."

[1] Sale's Koran, p. 367.

And it is the Mohammedan faith that Jesus can thus reappear, inasmuch as He was taken up into heaven without dying by the angels Gabriel, Michael, Raphael, and Uriel; and that it was Judas who was crucified in His stead, God having permitted that traitor to appear so like his Master in the eyes of the Jews that they took Him and delivered Him to Pilate. In the fourth chapter of the Koran, entitled "Women," it is said, "Therefore they [the Jews] have made void the covenant, and have not believed in the signs of God, and have slain the prophets unjustly, and have said our hearts are uncircumcised; and for that they have not believed in Jesus, and have spoken against Mary a grievous calumny, and have said, Verily we have slain Christ Jesus, the son of Mary, the apostle of God; yet they slew Him not, neither crucified Him, but He was represented by one in His likeness; and verily they who disagreed concerning Him were in doubt as to this matter, and had no sure knowledge thereof, but followed an uncertain opinion. They did not really kill Him, but God took Him up unto Himself. And God is mighty and wise, and there shall not be one of those who have received the Scripture who shall not believe in Him before His death, and on the day of resurrection He shall be a witness against them."

Christ having thus escaped death, and retained His natural body, is enabled to reappear in it, and

rule for forty years at Jerusalem, during which time the paradisiacal condition prophesied in the Bible will be established on the earth. Christ will embrace the Mohammedan religion, marry a wife, get children, kill Antichrist, die after forty years, and rise again at the resurrection. Nevertheless, Mohammed shall be the first to rise, and he also will become the intercessor between God and man at the Judgment, this office having been previously declined by Adam, Noah, Abraham, and Jesus.

Among the other signs which are to precede the resurrection, a war is predicted with the Greeks, and Constantinople is to be taken by the posterity of Isaac, who shall not win that city by force of arms, but the walls shall fall down while they cry out, "There is no god but God; God is most great." As they are dividing the spoil, news will come to them of the appearance of Antichrist, whereupon they shall leave all and return back.

The fourth great sign is the coming of Antichrist, whom Mohammedans call Al Dajjal. He is to be one-eyed, and marked on the forehead with the letters C.F.R., signifying *cafer* or infidel. They say that the Jews give him the name of Messiah ben David, and pretend that he is to come in the last days, and restore the kingdom to them.

According to the tradition of Mohammed, he is to appear first between Irak and Syria. They add, he is to ride on an ass, that he will be followed by

70,000 Jews of Ispahan, and continue on earth forty days, of which one will be equal to a year, another to a month, another to a week, and the rest common days; that he is to lay waste all places, but not Mecca or Medina. Then will come a war with the Jews, of whom the Mohammedans will make a tremendous slaughter, and the eruption of Gog and Magog, supposed by some Mohammedans to mean the Russians, who will pass the Lake of Tiberias, which they will drink dry, and then come on to Jerusalem, where they will greatly distress Jesus and His companions, till at His request God will destroy them.[1]

[1] The remaining greater signs are: that the sun shall rise in the west; the appearance of the beast — an allegorical creation, very similar to the one described in the Revelation; a smoke which will fill the earth; an eclipse of the moon; the return of the Arabs to their idolatry; the discovery of treasure on the Euphrates; the demolition of the temple of Mecca, or Caaba, by the Ethiopians; the speaking of beasts and inanimate things; the breaking out of fire in the Hejaz; the appearance of a man of the descendants of Kahtan; the coming of Mehdi, or the Director—this person the Shiites consider to be now alive, and concealed in some secret place till the time of his manifestation, which many of them conceive to be at hand; a wind which shall sweep away the souls of all who have but a grain of faith in their hearts. The lesser signs are: 1, decay of faith among men; 2, advancing of the meanest persons to eminent dignity; 3, that a maid-servant shall become the mother of her mistress—by which is meant, either that towards the end of the world men shall be much given to sensuality, or that the Mohammedans shall take many captives; 4, tumults and seditions; 5, "a war with the Turks" (this would seem to indicate a time when Islam shall be divided against itself); 6, great distress in the world, so that a man when he passes another's grave shall say, "Would to God that I were in his place;" 7, that

These are the greater signs which, according to their doctrine, are to precede the resurrection, but still leave the hour of it uncertain. The immediate sign will be the "blast of consternation," when the heavens will meet, the earth be shaken, and terrors similar to those predicted by Christ occur. Then will come the "blast of examination," when all creatures, both in heaven and earth, shall be destroyed, except those which God shall please to exempt from this fate. The last who shall die will be the angel of death. Forty years after this comes the "blast of the resurrection," when the trumpet shall be sounded the third time by Asrafil, who, together with Gabriel and Michael, will be previously restored to life, and, standing on the rock of the Temple of Jerusalem, shall at God's command call together all the dry and rotten bones, and other dispersed parts of the body, and the very hairs, to judgment. This angel will collect all the souls and fill his trumpet with them, and then blow them out into their respective bodies.

It is unnecessary here to go into the details of the resurrection and of the subsequent judgment—when all will pass over the narrow bridge Al Sirat, which, stretched across hell, will be finer than a hair and sharper than a sword—or of the Mohammedan con-

the provinces of Irak and Syria shall refuse to pay their tribute; 8, that the buildings of Medina shall reach to Ahab or Yhab.—Sale's Koran.

ception of Paradise or of hell, further than to call attention to their order. The first is assigned to wicked Mohammedans, the second to Jews, the third to Christians, the fourth to the Sabeans, the fifth to the Magians, the sixth to the idolaters, and the seventh—which is the worst and deepest of all—to the hypocrites of all religions : this will undoubtedly be by far the most crowded.

A ride of three hours from the foot of Tel el Faris across the plains brought us to one of the northern affluents of the Yarmuk, the Allân, which was clear and fordable, with a stony bed. It was spanned by an old Roman bridge of five arches, and the traces of the Roman road leading to it were visible. In the immediate vicinity were the ruins of what seemed to have been a temple, the walls of which were in places from six to eight feet in height, and some of the larger blocks of stone bore the marks of elaborate carving. It was in shape a parallelogram, and had been surrounded by a colonnade.

The stream which we here crossed is the eastern boundary of Jaulan, and we now entered Hauran, or ancient Auranitis, and in less than an hour reached the village of Tseil. This village, like the others in this part of the country, consisted of flat-roofed hovels, built of blocks of dolerite stone, which had been used in times gone by for the walls of far more imposing structures, and often bore traces of carving. They were now generally plastered with cow-dung.

We dismounted at the house of the sheikh, for we thought of passing the night here; but we found it contained only one room in which travellers could be lodged, and this was already full of visitors, who apparently intended to stay and sleep. It looked intensely stuffy, and was full of smoke, and probably of fleas; so we decided to urge our weary steeds on to Sheikh Sa'ad.

There were several fragments of columns lying in the courtyard of the sheikh's house, and some of them supported a sort of piazza in front of it. There is also an old Christian church here, which has been converted into a mosque.

Tseil is on the great caravan route from Jisr el Mejamia, a bridge over the Jordan below Gadara, to Damascus, and really the shortest road from Jerusalem to that city, though, in consequence of its supposed insecurity, and the monotony of the country through which it passes, it is never taken by tourists.

The next station to Tseil on the way to Damascus, distant five miles, is Nawa, the ancient Neve—a place of great interest, on account of the extensive ruins by which it is surrounded. Mr Merill is of opinion that Nawa is the site of the ancient Golan, once a city of refuge, and supports this hypothesis by the fact that Tseil seems unquestionably to be the ancient Thersila mentioned by Jerome, and which was inhabited by Samaritans; and we are told that in immediate proximity to the

city of refuge was a town where there dwelt a turbulent population hostile to the Jews. It does not appear, however, that the American explorer ever visited this locality; but Burckhardt, who was at Nawa in 1812, says that it contains the remains of temples and other public buildings, showing that it must have been at one time a city of some importance. Arab writers describe it as having been the home of Job. Muhammed el Makdeshi says, p. 81 of his 'Geography:' "And in Hauran and Batanæa lie the villages of Job and his home; the chief place is Nawa, rich in wheat and other cereals." Jakut el Hamawi describes Nawa as "the residence [*menzil*] of Job." And Ibn er Rabi says, "To the prophets buried in the regions of Damascus belongs also Job, and his tomb is near Nawa, in the district of Hauran."

We galloped for an hour more over the plain before we saw before us, in the light of the setting sun, the village of Es Sa'diyeh, or Sheikh Sa'ad, built on a low conical mound; and about a mile distant to the south-west, also on a mound, the monastery of Job —Dêr Eyub—a quadrangular building, from which the Turkish flag was floating.

We rode to the village first; but its appearance was so squalid, and the negroes who inhabited it looked so uninviting, that we went on to the monastery, and determined to throw ourselves upon the hospitality of the Mutessarif or governor of the pro-

vince, who had recently converted it into the seat of his government.

We followed the broad beaten track and line of telegraph-posts, which indicated a direct communication between this point and Damascus, and soon found ourselves at the gateway of the monastery, opposite to which a few shops, a smithy, and some military storehouses formed one side of the only street in the place. Here we were most politely received by the governor's secretary, who led us into the quadrangle of the monastery, — an extensive courtyard, containing in the centre the residence and offices of the Mutessarif, and a Christian church —no longer, of course, used as such. Built under the wall on the sides of the square were barracks for troops, depots for stores, and the apartments of sundry officials. One of these was occupied by the secretary, which he kindly offered to place at our disposal; and as it was superior to anything in the shape of accommodation we had seen since leaving Sidon, we gratefully became his guests. According to Arabian authors, the monastery was built by the Jefnide King Amr I., who reigned about 180 A.D. If this is the case, it is evident that the Arabs of Hauran embraced Christianity at a very early period, and were the architects of probably the most ancient ecclesiastical edifice of this description of which we have any record. According to the history of Ibn Kethir, the Græco-Ghassanide army, under the com-

mand of Theodoric, a brother of the Emperor Heraclius, revolted here a few months prior to the battle of the Yarmuk, which resulted in the loss of Syria to the Byzantines. A Greek inscription which had formerly been in the church was now placed over the entrance gateway, but it was so much effaced that I did not succeed in deciphering it. In consequence of the unhealthiness of Mezarib, which was formerly the seat of government, the monastery, which was partially in ruins, was bought about three years ago, converted into a barrack, and became the residence of the Mutessarif. It is built of fine square blocks of dolerite. A few weeks before our arrival five or six hundred soldiers had been sent here by Midhat Pasha from Damascus, for the purpose of maintaining order in the province: of these only about two hundred remained, the others having been sent to points where their presence was deemed more necessary. We paid a visit to the governor, and had a long discussion with him on the subject of the administration of his province. It is composed of the four districts of Hauran, Ajlun, Jaulan, and Jedur. Of these districts Hauran is by far the most productive and thickly populated. The high range of mountains on the east, in old times called the hills of Bashan, and now the Jebel Druse, are inhabited by about 50,000 of the Druse people; and on their lower slopes there are several villages of Christians, chiefly of the orthodox Greek Church. In the plains

the peasantry dress like the Arabs, and are no doubt ethnologically nearly allied to them. Though subject to Bedouin incursions, they have managed to hold their own more successfully than the natives of the other districts. All they want is protection; and this the new governor-general seems determined to give them. Hitherto they have been compelled to purchase safety by a system of black-mail; and what they fear is, if the Government chastise predatory Arabs now, that a new Vali may succeed the present one, and not continue the same policy, but for the sake of economy or other reasons withdraw the troops: in that case the Arabs, undeterred by fear of consequences, would revenge themselves upon the unfortunate villagers. On the occasion of our visit a sense of security pervaded the country, to which it had long been a stranger; nor could we have desired a better proof of its peace and order than in the perfect security with which we wandered about it.

In Jedur and Jaulan the settled population has considerably diminished of late years; still there do not seem to be any great tracts of land in which the absolute title is vested in the Government. The Mutessarif himself was said to be the largest landholder in Jaulan; and though villages may be deserted, in the event of a purchase of them being attempted from the Government, claimants would be apt to spring up from unexpected quarters, as the Government have issued at some period or other

tapoo papers for the greater part of Jaulan, and these have in many cases not run out. These papers give a prescriptive possession, based on occupation and cultivation, and proprietors generally take some means of keeping their titles alive; though probably, if they came to be strictly examined, they would be found defective. Nevertheless, magnificent grazing-land could doubtless be picked up in Jaulan now for next to nothing.

It was impossible to pass the night upon a mound which popular tradition identifies with the dunghill upon which Job scraped himself with potsherds, without feeling a strong desire to trace its origin, and raise, however slightly, the veil which shrouds the mystery of his place of abode. Leaving the controversy as to his real or mythical character to be discussed by Ewald, Renan, Froude, and others far more competent to deal with it than myself, there can be no doubt that among the inhabitants of this region the tradition that it was the land of Uz runs back to a very early date. Biblical commentators usually place that region very far to the south and east of Bashan, in Arabia Deserta, to the north of the 30th parallel of latitude, and contiguous to Idumæa. The arguments in favour of this view are, that in a notice appended to the Alexandrian version of the Bible it is stated that "Job bore previously the name of Jobab," and that a tradition adopted by the Jews and some Christian fathers

identify him with Jobab, "son of Zerah of Bozrah," and successor of Bela, first king of Edom. Zerah, Jobab's father, was the son of Reuel, the son of Esau. This Bozrah was not the Bozrah in Bashan, but in Edom. Moreover, Mohammedan writers tell us that Job was of the race of Esau.

It is also said that incursions could not have been made by the Chaldeans and Sabeans—the one from the banks of the Euphrates, and the other from Yemen, the home of the Sabeans—unless Uz was situated somewhere between them in the locality indicated. To this it may be replied that the evidence identifying Job with Jobab is very slight; but granting this, it might have been part of Edom in the days of Esau's grandson, while, if at that epoch the Chaldeans, as is generally supposed, had not yet descended to the plains of Babylon, but were a predatory tribe living in Kurdistan, Bashan would be a most convenient raiding-ground. It is true that it would have been distant from the Sabeans; but so, on the other hand, was Edom from Kurdistan. And to this day the Arabs make marauding expeditions and hostile demonstrations over this very track. Since the period of our visit, Ibn Rashid is reported to have advanced with an immense force from Jebel Shammar, in the heart of Arabia, a distance of about 600 miles, into the outlying districts of Hauran. Wetzstein, I think, clearly shows that the land of Uz mentioned in Jer. xxv. 20, cannot refer to Edom, but

must have reference to a region near Damascus; while Josephus (Ant., i. 6. 4) states that "the Arameans, whom the Greeks call the Syrians, were descended from Aram. Uz, who was a son of Aram, settled Trachonitis and Damascus,"—a fact which is relied upon by Ewald, who places Uz in the south of Bashan. William of Tyre narrates that the Crusaders, returning from a marauding expedition in Hauran, wished to reconquer a position which "lies in the province of Suite," and that Bildad, Job's friend, who is on that account called the Shuhite, comes from it. The modern name of this district is Zuweit, and it lies about twenty miles south of Sheikh Sa'ad. While the modern village of Tema, the inhabitants of which are to this day called Temani, lying forty miles to the east of Sheikh Sa'ad, may fairly be assumed to have been the home of Eliphaz the Temanite.

Again, the tradition of the Arabs is not to be despised. It is evident that a Jefnide king would not have built a monastery on the site, had it not been a spot to which the tradition of Job had attached—long, doubtless, before the Christian era.

There is probably no part of the world where the native races have undergone so little change as in the region between the Jordan and the Euphrates; and to this very day the descendants of the contemporaries of Job, and possibly his own, inhabit the plains of their ancestors. A tradition here has therefore quite a different value from those which attach

to Christian sites or relics in Palestine, many of which were, so to speak, discovered "to order" long after any evidence by which they could be identified had ceased to exist, in the hope that they might confirm the truth of a tradition. There seems to be more logic in confirming a site by a tradition than in confirming a tradition by a site or a relic. If, therefore, this has always been considered, by the race which has inhabited it from time immemorial, to be the land in which Job lived—in other words, the land of Uz—it is certainly an argument in favour of the possibility of such being the case. The historian of Jerusalem, Mugîr ed-din el Hambeli, in the chapter on the legends of the prophets, says: "Job came from El-Es [Uz ?], and the Damascene province of Batanæa [which includes Hauran] was his property." Again, there is a passage in the 'Onomasticon' which furnishes a very early testimony to the existence of this tradition, and which runs as follows: "According to the view of a certain one [κατα τινος] this region is the land of Asitis [Ausitis], the home of Job; while, according to others, it is Arabia; and again, according to others, it is the land of Sihon."

Porter tells us that the people of Suweideh—a town he visited in the Hauran—say that Job was king of Batanæa, while to this day the peasants call all this country the land of Job (Bêlad Eyub). In regard to the locality which has been fixed upon as his abode, it is most likely that this is

an instance of the tradition being confirmed by the site. It may have been true that Job lived in these parts because every one had always said so; but it is quite possible that immemorial tradition having in general terms been to this effect, a tendency should be developed to confirm it by finding the exact spot on which he had lain, the bath in which he washed, and the potsherd with which he scraped himself.

Whether the extreme veneration which attaches to the monastery and to the Makam or station of Job, arises from the fact that it was originally, as I shall presently endeavour to show, a centre of Baal-worship, and that it only became sacred to the memory of Job when the other *culte* had passed away; or whether the Baal-worshippers took advantage of an anterior sanctity with which its real or supposed connection with Job had invested it,—it is not possible to say. In the East it is a common thing for the same shrine to serve the purpose of many succeeding religions. A spot once sanctified by worship is thus very likely to become venerated on quite a new set of considerations, and in some cases even the tombs of the saints of one religion become the tombs of the saints of another.

For some reason known only to themselves, the Holy Places at Sheikh Sa'ad, or Es Sa'diyeh, seem to be more sacred in the eyes of negro Mohammedans than any other class of Moslems. The tomb of Job

is a sacred shrine to which woolly-haired pilgrims resort from Soudan, first visiting Mecca and Medina, then Damascus, and then the Makam Eyub. Here they remain for a month or more, washing themselves in Job's fountain, praying at his tomb, and finding congenial companions in their African hosts; for, besides being a resort for pilgrims, Sheikh Sa'ad is also a place of refuge for negro slaves who have been the property of Arabs and have escaped, or been in other servitude and have been granted their liberty. These Holy Places are also venerated still by Christians, as they were in the days of Chrysostom, who says of them, "Many pilgrims come from the ends of the earth to Arabia, in order to seek for the dunghill on which Job lay, and with rapture to kiss the ground where he suffered."[1]

We rode over to the Makam in the morning in company with the governor's secretary. The tomb is a small white-domed building, apparently very ancient, where a Moslem saint, Sa'ad—from which the village takes its name—is also said to be buried. It is situated in the Makam or station, which is surrounded by vegetable gardens, in the midst of which is another building with three small white cupolas, which is the residence of the negro sheikh of the village. In the immediate vicinity is the "wadjet sêjidnâ Eyub," "the lavatory of our Lord Job"—a cleft in the rocks about the size of an ordinary

[1] Homil. v. de Stud., § i. tom. ii. p. 59.

plunge-bath, full of the clearest water, and tempting to look at for ablutionary purposes. Over it is a small building of dolerite stone, also bearing the marks of extreme antiquity.

Of Job's fountain or bath it is said in the Koran[1] — "And it was said unto him [Job], Strike the earth with thy foot; which, when he had done, a fountain sprang up; and it was said unto him, This is for thee to wash in and to drink. And we said unto him, Take a handful of rods and strike thy wife therewith, and break not thine oath. Verily we found him a patient person."

The Makam and bath are situated at the foot of a mound about a hundred feet high, which is now covered with the wretched huts of the negro population. No Arabs or Syrians live in it, and I was struck with the paucity of women. It was curious to come across this collection of the sons of Ham in the midst of the land of Uz, their huts constructed of the massive stones which once composed the handsome dwellings of the descendants of Shem. The old granite columns are now built into the mud walls, and the carved entablatures are plastered with cow-dung. The inhabitants, ragged and poverty-stricken in the extreme, consist of about 200 souls. The condition of this miserable, squalid population, in the midst of the

[1] Chap. 33.

richest and most productive land imaginable, tells its own tale. The Makam possesses a character for sanctity in the eyes of the Arabs, which is its best protection. They seem to regard it with a superstitious awe, and neither levy black-mail upon the inhabitants nor plunder their gardens, whilst it also enjoys immunity from taxation by the Government.

At the top of the mound, and almost surrounded by hovels, was an ancient temple supported on nine arches. It is not used for sacred purposes now, but has been a Moslem place of prayer. Prior to this it was evidently a Christian church, as the old belfry and the internal arrangement and shape testify. But there are traces of a yet greater antiquity in its columns and architecture; and there can be little doubt that it has also been a Roman temple, and possibly, anterior to that, a sacred edifice of Phœnician worship. It is about twenty yards square; and the roof, which is on a level with the top of the mound, is composed of slabs of stone nine or ten feet long, eighteen inches broad, and a foot deep. In the centre of the building is a monolith of black basalt; its base is embedded in the *débris* which has fallen in upon the floor, but which, if it were cleared away, would leave it about ten feet high. The top has been broken off. It is now pointed out as the Sakhrat Eyub, or stone to which Job resorted for relief

from his cutaneous affliction, and is for that reason regarded with great veneration by the negroes, by whom it might be advantageously used for the same purpose; but, as my friend Captain Phibbs suggested, it was doubtless originally a Phallic emblem. Everything points to the extreme probability of the ancient city, the ruins of which no doubt partially composed the present mound, having been a centre of Baal-worship. The old name has been lost, and I have been unable to find any clue identifying it as the site of a known city; but in the immediate neighbourhood are two villages—one now called Ashtereh, and the other Tel Asherah. The former I saw at a distance, but did not visit, as we were assured that no ruins of any kind existed there; the other I will describe presently. It is reasonable to assume that one of these is the site of the ancient Ashtaroth, one of the Levitical cities located in the half-tribe of Manasseh, and given, with its suburbs and surrounding pasture-lands, to the Gershonites (1 Chron. vi. 71). Asherah is the symbol of the goddess Ashtaroth, the principal female divinity of the Phœnicians, as Baal was the principal male divinity. Both names are frequently used in the plural—signifying possibly, when so used, the androgynous character. Thus Baalim may have included Baal and Ashtaroth as one duality; while Ashtoreth included Baal and Ashtaroth also, as two in one. In the earlier

books of the Old Testament, only the singular form, Ashtaroth, occurs, though Baal and Baalim seem to be used indiscriminately. The first we hear of the feminine plural is when Solomon "went after Ashtoreth the goddess of the Zidonians." The original conception, before it became degraded into an obscene idolatry, was evidently that of a dual first cause, and may have been derived from a belief in the creative principle Elohim, the singular of which is Eloah, indicated in the 26th and 27th verses of the first chapter of Genesis. The word Baal, separated from its idolatry, simply means lord and proprietor of all; while Ashtaroth seems to have been either the goddess of the moon, or the planet Venus. Hence her successor in Greek mythology was Astarte, and Baal became looked upon as the sun-god.

Strabo mentions the goddess Aphrodite under the name of Attara, which is probably identical with Ashtera; and Lieutenant Wilford[1] calls attention to the circumstance that Ataví, the "Goddess of the Grove" of Hindu mythology, was also called Ashtârá, and that a pyramid in her honour, by name Ashtârá-Devi, is placed by the writer of the Purána on the Cali river, in the woods of Tapas. This Ashtârá or Ataví is identical with the goddess Amba, whose consort, Bhava, was the author of existence.

[1] Asiatic Researches, vol. iii. p. 389.

The proximity of a village which still preserves without change the name of the symbol of the goddess, can leave very little doubt that the temple containing the ancient monolith at Sheikh Sa'ad must have been originally dedicated to Baal, and the scene of Jewish idolatry. Among the nations left "to prove Israel by," were the Zidonians; the Hivites, that dwelt in Mount Lebanon, from Mount Baal-Hermon to the entering in of Hamath; and the Amorites, who dwelt in this very country: and we are told that "they did evil in the sight of the Lord, and served Baalim and Asherah," or, as that word is rendered by the translators, "the groves." If our conjecture that the monolith at Sheikh Sa'ad represents what we suppose it to have done, it becomes one of the most ancient and interesting monuments in Syria,—the only one, in fact, so far as I am aware, in existence, which we can still trace as a record, in their own country or its vicinity, of the worship of the Phœnicians.

It is about seven miles from Sheikh Sa'ad to Tel Asherah. The road is over a fertile plain, and crosses first the Wady el Lebweh, and then the Wady Yabis. Both these contain affluents of the Yarmuk, but they are occasionally dry in summer. Shortly after quitting Sheikh Sa'ad, we leave on the right, about two miles distant, the village of Ashtereh, standing out on the plain. Just before arriving at Tel Asherah we cross the principal source



GORGE OF THE YARMUK FROM TEL ASHERAH

of the Yarmuk, by the old Roman bridge of nine arches, one of which has fallen in, and has not been repaired — now called the bridge of Sira. The Yarmuk at this point is just sinking below the level of the plain through which it has been meandering, and in the course of the next mile plunges down a series of cascades into the stupendous gorges through which it winds, until it ultimately falls into the Jordan below Gadara. This river was called Yarmuk by the Hebrews, Hieromax by the Romans, and is now called the Sheriat el Mandhur, from a tribe of Arabs who pasture in its valley. Below the bridge are some ruins — probably, from the shape of the foundations, those of a temple; but only a few trunks of prostrate columns and carved entablatures are visible among the large square blocks of dolerite of which it was built. We had two Kurdish zaptiehs with us, whom the Mutessarif at Sheikh Sa'ad had insisted upon our taking as guides and protectors; but they could not tell us whether this ruin had a name, nor was there a creature in sight whom we could ask.

About a mile beyond, on the right, is situated the village of Asherah, crowning a mound or *tel* about seventy feet high. Its situation is strikingly picturesque. On the one side is the gorge of the Yarmuk, and on the other the plain is cleft by a chasm, at the head of which is a small waterfall. On the high projecting promontory between the

gorge and the chasm are the abundant remains of what was once an ancient city, strongly fortified in rear by three tiers of walls, which may still be very distinctly traced. It must have been impregnable. A few wretched huts compose the present village, but the traces of a departed grandeur lie strewn in every direction. I observed nothing during my hurried survey of the surface-remains, which did not belong to the Greek and Roman type of architecture, common to the civilisation which prevailed in this part of the world during the first and second centuries after Christ. We walked through the *débris*,—as none of the remains were standing, they could scarcely be called ruins,—and sat on a prostrate column on the extreme verge of the precipice, which surrounded us on three sides, and looked down the winding gorge, with the Yarmuk at least 500 feet below us. Our arrival produced the greatest interest and commotion, and in a few moments we were surrounded by an admiring and wondering crowd. It was quite impossible, however, to extract any information out of them as to any objects of interest which there might be in the neighbourhood, and we had no time to explore for ourselves. There can be little doubt that the sides of the gorge are honeycombed with cave-dwellings, after the invariable manner of the former inhabitants of the Hauran, and that the explorer would find himself well repaid by an examination of a spot so replete

with the interest and association attaching to a civilisation and a worship of which this must have been a centre. It is probable that Ashtereh, the village we saw but did not visit, is the site of the ancient Ashtaroth. The only traveller who has ever described it is Captain Newbold; but he did not visit Tel Asherah, and was apparently unconscious of its existence. In a paper contributed to the Royal Geographical Society,[1] he says of Ashtereh that it is "situated on a mound from 50 to 100 feet in height—the base of trap, and its upper part covered with a peculiar dark-coloured soil, mingled with stones and fragments of ancient pottery. Near the base of the hill ancient foundations of massive stones, hewn and unhewn, can be distinctly traced. The soil of the surrounding plain is strewn with fragments of stone and pottery." Captain Newbold assumes, I think with reason, that this village is the site of Ashtaroth; but there is another Ashtaroth mentioned in Scripture, where "Chedorlaomer, and the kings that were with him, smote the Rephaims in Ashtaroth Karnaim" (Gen. xiv. 5), or Ashtaroth of the two horns or peaks; and there seems to me to be good ground for assuming that while the Ashtereh described by Newbold may be identical with Ashtaroth, the Tel Asherah we visited, and which, so far as I am aware, has not been examined before, may be the site of Ashtaroth Karnaim, for the following reasons:—

[1] Proceedings R. G. S., vol. xvi.: 1846.

In the wars which took place between Judas Maccabeus and Timotheus, we read that the latter took refuge in a fortress called Carnion, which is elsewhere alluded to in the First Book of Maccabees, v. 44, as Carnaim, a city of Galaad, celebrated for its temple of Atargatis, which can be none other than Ashtaroth Carnaim. It is described (2 Macc. xii. 21) as "impregnable and hard to come at, by reason of the straitness of the places"—a description which exactly tallies with the strategical position of Tel Asherah. Here, after taking Timotheus prisoner and routing his army with a great slaughter, Judas moved to Ephron, "a strong city," which he also took, advancing then to Scythopolis or Bethshan. The site of Ephron is not known; but the position of Scythopolis—which is nearly opposite the mouth of the Yarmuk—relatively to Tel Asherah, which is on its banks, affords a strong presumption that the campaign was in this part of the country, and that Tel Asherah and Ashtaroth Karnaim may be identical.

The temple of Atargatis at Ashtaroth Karnaim was destroyed by Judas Maccabeus (1 Macc. v. 44). The goddess Atargatis is represented on ancient coins with a fish's tail, and was apparently the feminine correlative of the god Dagon, who is described in the Bible as having "a fishy part" or "stump" (1 Sam. v. 4). Plutarch says that some regarded her "as Aphrodite, others as Here, others as the

cause and natural power which provides the principles and seeds for all things from moisture." Porter considers her identical with Ashtoreth. It is just possible that the ruined temple we saw near the bridge, only a mile distant, may have been that once dedicated to this divinity.

A curious confirmation of the connection which existed between Dagon and Ashtaroth or Atargatis, is to be found in the capture of the body of Saul in Gilboa by the Philistines, when "they cut off his head, and stripped off his armour, and sent into the land of the Philistines round about, to publish it in the house of their idols, and among the people. And they put his armour in the house of Ashtaroth; and they fastened his body to the wall of Bethshan" (1 Sam. xxxi. 9, 10). And it is added, in the account in Chronicles, that "they fastened his head in the temple of Dagon" (1 Chron. x. 10). Bethshan is about forty miles to the west of Tel Asherah—no very great distance to send the head and armour as an evidence of their achievements to their people, and as a thank-offering to their idols. As Ashtoreth was the goddess of the moon, the two horns may be in allusion to the crescent, which was her symbol. That Ashtaroth Karnaim should have been "a strong and great city, hard to besiege," and in the land of Gilead, might all apply to this Ashtaroth; but Eusebius and Jerome, in the 'Onomasticon,' describe Ashtaroth Karnaim as

"Vicus grandis in angulo Batanææ." And they speak of two villages of the same name which lay nine miles apart—"inter Adaram et Abilam civitates." Now I have already alluded to the two places, one called Tel Asherah and the other Ashtereh, about seven miles apart; and at this point we were almost equidistant, as the crow flies, from Adra or Derá and Abila, the one lying about eleven English miles to the south-east, and the other about fourteen miles to the south-west. Porter denies altogether that the identification of the modern Adra or Derá as Edrei, the former capital of Og, the King of Bashan, by Eusebius, is sound, and places it, apparently with reason, at the south-west corner of the Lejah, at a place still called Edra by the Arabs—a sound which corresponds more nearly to Edrei than Derá, and lying about fifteen miles to the north-east of the spot on which we stood. Derá, however, which has been visited and described by Wetzstein, is unquestionably the site of the important Roman town of Adraha mentioned in the Peutinger tables; while it is the most wonderful underground city, with its streets of deserted houses and subterranean market-place, which has yet been discovered, and would well repay further exploration. Whichever be the site of the ancient Edrei, Tel Asherah would still correspond to the definition of the city of Og, who "dwelt in Ashtaroth in Edrei" (Deut. i. 4), "at Ashtaroth and at

Edrei" (Josh. xii. 4, xiii. 12), or "who was at Ashtaroth" (Josh. ix. 10). Eusebius says, "Ashtaroth Karnaim is at present [about A.D. 310] a very large village beyond the Jordan, in the province of Arabia, which is also called Batanæa: here, according to tradition, they fix the home of Job." The fact that Eusebius and Jerome so exactly describe the position of the two villages relatively not only to each other, but to the two towns of Dera and Abil, and that Eusebius calls Ashtaroth Karnaim the home of Job, whose residence is to this day shown in its immediate proximity, disposes, I think, of Wetzstein's elaborate argument, in which that careful and painstaking traveller endeavours to prove the identity of Ashtaroth with the ancient Bosra. The subject is one which it would not be difficult for those skilled in the identification of sites to clear. The writer upon it in Smith's 'Dictionary of the Bible' says: "The only trace of the name yet recovered in these interesting districts is Tell Ashtereh or Asherah, and of this nothing more than the name is known." In Baedeker's Guide, usually most accurate, nothing is said of this Tel Asherah, though it is marked in his map, but not mentioned in the text, on the route on which it lies. In Dr Smith's map, Ashtaroth Karnaim is placed at the modern Sanamen, twenty miles to the north of Tel Asherah; and the position of this latter village and the country round Sheikh Sa'ad is by no means accurately de-

fined, while Wetzstein's, Ritter's, Kiepert's and Van der Velde's configuration of this region are all extremely defective; though there seems to be a general consensus on the part of some of the latter, which is shared in by Ewald, to place the Ashtaroths at these villages.

Porter says that there is nothing to fix the identity of Tel Asherah with Ashtaroth, as the resemblance of the names is only apparent. But the Hebrew word "Ashera," translated "groves" in the Bible, and always mentioned in connection with Baal, is identical with the Arabic word by which this place is known; while the word "Ashtereh," which still more closely resembles "Ashtaroth," is retained by the natives as the name of the adjacent village. In Porter's route from Tel Asherah to Nawa he makes the unaccountable omission of leaving out Sheikh Sa'ad altogether, the proximity of which to Tel Asherah, with all its interesting associations connected with Job, tend so strongly to confirm the identity of this ruined stronghold with Ashtaroth Karnaim; but he never seems personally to have visited any of these places. That the four mounds upon which the monastery and temple of Job and the villages of Ashtereh and Asherah are respectively situated would richly reward excavation, I have very little doubt.

Tel Asherah possesses, however, an historical interest of a far more recent date than that which we

have been endeavouring to attach to it; for it was made the rendezvous by Saladin for that famous army with which he afterwards vanquished the Crusaders at Hattin in A.D. 1187. When Count Raymond of Chatillon, then Lord of Kerak, broke the truce which he had made with the Saracen chief, and plundered a Moslem caravan on the Hadj from Damascus to Mecca, killing the men and carrying off the women, Saladin was able to take advantage of the indignation created by this breach of faith to unite the contending Arab factions, and to collect them into an army, which he assembled at Tel Asherah, and with which he conquered nearly all Palestine.

I could only regret that, the object of my journey being in no way connected with the past, and the time at my disposal limited, I had neither the previous knowledge nor the conveniences necessary for exploration of this kind, and that my observations are therefore cursory and superficial in their character. I could not but wonder that a region comparatively so accessible and so full of interest should not have been more thoroughly explored.

The absence of tents, as well as the necessity of getting through my work as speedily as possible, rendered it impossible for me to linger over these and other ruins which I visited. The field for antiquarian and archæological research in these regions is so vast and enticing that, if one has any

other object in view, the temptation must be steadily resisted.[1]

While I was sketching the view of the gorge, Captain Phibbs tried to get something out of the crowd. But beyond the fact that they were very poor — which was a self-evident proposition — and that the whole male population of the place was present, we did not derive much information. I counted the male population, and it amounted to forty. They were very civil, and brought us some coffee—which was, however, of the most undrinkable description; and I had some difficulty in forcing them to take remuneration for their hospitality: they were as proud in their politeness as they were poverty-stricken.

I longed to scramble down to the bed of the Yarmuk and follow it up to the bridge of Sira, so as to see the cataracts and examine the sides of the gorge; but the necessity of leaving ourselves time to reach Irbid, where we had decided to spend the night, rendered this impossible, and I reluctantly turned my back upon a spot which had proved of such deep and unexpected interest.

[1] It is a matter for congratulation that the Palestine Exploration Society have recently decided to undertake the survey of Eastern Palestine. From a geographical point of view the results which will be obtained must prove most valuable, as the map which has been produced by the American Survey—with the exception of that part of the Belka which had been previously surveyed by Colonel Warren —still leaves much to be desired.

CHAPTER IV.

WE ENTER GILEAD—MEZARIB—THE *CAVEA ROOB*—IRBID—A SURLY CADI—VIEW FROM THE CASTLE—THE RUINS OF ABILA—SUBTERRANEAN DWELLINGS AND STONE HOUSES AT IRBID—A RAID UPON THE BENI SUKHR—THE RUINS OF CAPITOLIAS—UNDERGROUND EXPLORATION—AN ENERGETIC CAIMAKAM—SUMMARY PUNISHMENT OF THE BEDOUINS—ARAB CUSTOMS.

WE were now riding over plains which had been the battle-field of Chedorlaomer with the Rephaim giants; of the Israelites with Og, the King of Bashan; and the scene of sundry conflicts between the invading Assyrians and the Jews, for across these plains the former marched to invade Palestine, and the brunt of the shock of hostile attack from the east invariably fell upon Gad and Manasseh. And it was on these plains, here cleft by the Yarmuk, that in A.D. 636 the Arabs, inspired by the frenzy of a new religion, fought that bloody battle with the Byzantines which drove out Christian civilisation, such as it was, from Syria, and established Moslem supremacy.

And so, passing out of the land of Bashan, we entered "the land of Gilead, a hard, rocky region," as its name signifies, though the country we were

now riding over would not come under that definition. It is probable that Gilead extended to this point, and that it was sometimes used in a wider sense in the Bible than its geographical limits would imply, and included the southern part of Bashan. We are told that half Gilead was possessed by Sihon, King of the Amorites, and the other half by Og, King of Bashan, the Jabbok being the boundary between the two (Josh. xii. 1-6). Moses gave to the half-tribe of Manasseh "half Gilead, and Ashtaroth, and Edrei, cities of the kingdom of Og in Bashan" (Josh. xiii. 31). According to Porter, the land of Gilead extended from the Yarmuk on the north to the valley of Heshbon on the south, which would make it about sixty miles long; while its breadth, by Biblical inference, would be about twenty miles. Our present position would in that case have been in its extreme north-east corner. The pasture-land of Jaulan was here giving way to cultivation, and in an hour we reached Mezarib, a station on the Hadj or pilgrimage road from Damascus to Mecca, and the great grain centre of the Hauran. As commercially it is one of the most important places in this district, we had been looking forward to it as a town possibly possessing some signs of civilisation ; but we were most grievously disappointed. It was relatively large—that is, it may have contained 800 or 1000 souls, but they lived in the usual collection of squalid huts ; and the attempt

at a bazaar, in which there were a few dirty little shops, was only an additional indication of the primitive condition of the country and its inhabitants generally. There was a large khan, which had been finished only a few years ago by Zia Pasha, at a cost of 469,000 piastres, but it has since been abandoned, and is now rapidly falling into ruin; and there were tortuous, narrow, evil-smelling streets, and a miasmatic atmosphere generally about the place, which quite accounted for its bad reputation in a sanitary point of view. In winter the whole place is flooded; and even on the occasion of our visit, there was too much standing water for health.

A copious warm spring gushes out of the earth with force enough to turn a mill which has been established here to grind corn for the pilgrims. It is one of the few mills in the world which is turned by tepid water. The stream, after turning the mill, runs into the small lake of El Bejeh, in which there are several warm springs: it is extremely clear, and abounds with fish. In the middle of it is an island, covered with huts, and approached by a causeway. The Owerid, on issuing from this lake, after a short course precipitates itself over a ledge sixty feet in height, forming a fine cascade, and is in fact one of the sources of the Yarmuk; and on the opposite side of it from the village is an old castle, containing a mosque and some storehouses, also in a decaying condition. It is said to have been built by the Sul-

tan Selim, the Ottoman conqueror of Syria, about the year 1500; but the materials of which it is composed are of much older date, and Burckhardt found a Greek inscription turned topsy-turvy in the wall, "to the memory of Quadratiames, son of Diogenes, who was beloved of all, and lived seventy years." On the opposite side of the small lake are some carved basaltic blocks and other Greek remains, indicating that it had formerly been the site of a town.

Altogether, if it is not an inviting spot, it possesses the merit of a certain picturesque quaintness and originality, and during the time of the halt of the Hadj, must be a bustling, interesting place. At that period there is a fair held here, which lasts for ten days. There has been a project on foot to connect it with Damascus by a tramway, which should tap the grain-growing district of the Hauran, and feed the road of the French Company from Damascus to Beyrout. I doubt, however, whether, until a railway is brought into the country, it will ever be worth while to make a tramway, the only termination of which will be a carriage-road. The true port of the Hauran is not Beyrout, but Haifa or Acre, to which latter place at present all the corn of the Hauran is conveyed by camels, by way of the southern part of Jaulan, and across the Jordan just below the Sea of Tiberias.

We left Mezarib by the broad track of the pilgrims' road to Mecca, keeping a due southerly

direction, and leaving Derá, or the controverted Edrei, about five miles on our left. For an hour or more we traversed a rich, well-cultivated, undulating country, passing in half an hour the dry Wady Talid, and shortly after the Wady Zeidy, both falling into the Yarmuk, and spanned by old Roman bridges; then we turned off to the right from the Hadj road, and crossed high rolling downs, and our zaptiehs told us we had now left Hauran and had entered Ajlun. We stopped to rest in a gorge between the cliffs of chalk where there was a spring and some small trees—the first we had seen since leaving Banias. This Wady, which was the largest and most precipitous we had crossed, was, I believe, here called the Wady Rahûb, and lower down the Wady Shellaleh. From the fact of the numerous caverns in its chalk cliffs, and its position, I am inclined to think that in it are the *Cavea Roob* mentioned in the History of William of Tyre, in which (lib. xxii. c. 21) it is said that the Crusaders, on their return from a marauding expedition in Hauran, wished to reconquer a strong position, the *Cavea Roob*, which they had lost a short time before. "This place," says the historian, "lies in Suite, a district distinguished by its pleasantness; and Baldad, Job's friend, who is on that account called the Suite, is said to have come from it." Now the gorge in which we were lunching formed the northern boundary of the modern Zuweit, a district which, on emerg-

ing from it, we merely skirted, leaving it to the south-east. And again the same historian says, "After having passed Decapolis [the district we were now entering], we came to the pass of Roob, and further on into the plain of Medan [this is the plateau across which we had been riding from Mezarib], which stretches far and wide in every direction, and is intersected by the river Dan [so the Yarmuk was called in the time of the Crusaders], which falls into the Jordan between Tiberias and Scythopolis." It is probable that the numerous caverns by which we were surrounded were none other than "the swinging caves of Roob," or Mu'allakat Rahûb, which seem first to have been discovered by Wetzstein in 1860, and which are doubtless identical with the *Cavea Roob* of William of Tyre; but I did not then know the interest which attached to the spot. Clambering up the opposite side of the gorge, we found ourselves on an elevated undulating plain. There was something so pure and exhilarating in the air, that our whole *cortège*, including the baggage-mules, started off at a gallop; and I could well understand that a belief should exist at Damascus that the whole of this region is free from disease, and that the inhabitants should flock thither to escape local epidemics. The Romans were so well aware of its salubrious character that they called it *Palæstina Salutaris;* while with the poets of Hauran "the cool-blowing Nukra" is a favourite expression.

Soon after leaving the gorge we reached the troglodyte village of Es Sal, and crossed an old Roman aqueduct which used to supply the city of Gadara with water, distant twenty miles to the west. A large part of the population of Hauran and this part of Ajlun still live in caves. In the Bible this land was called the land of the giants (Deut. iii. 13), and there can be no doubt that in those ancient times the population lived principally in subterranean dwellings, the massive entrances to which were slabs of stone; indeed, there is probably no country in the world where an immigrant population would find such excellent shelter all ready prepared for them, or where they could step into the identical abodes which had been vacated by their occupants at least fifteen hundred years ago, and use the same doors and windows. The grottoes in which the squalid population of Es Sal lived, were not sufficiently tempting for us to stay and explore, the more especially as it was getting late, and we certainly had no fancy to pass the night in them; so we pushed on over the fresh breezy country to Irbid. Here we found that the Caimakam or local authority was absent on an expedition against the Arabs, and that the Cadi or judge was the principal official in the place. This worthy, however, proved to be a Moslem of the most bigoted type, and did not rise to receive us when we entered, or even ask us to sit down. As he was not in his own house, but in

the reception-room of the Caimakam, we seated ourselves on the divan without further ceremony, and proceeded to make ourselves comfortable. The Cadi, after apparently hesitating whether he should try to turn us out or go out himself, decided on the latter course, and we occupied the apartment during the remainder of our stay. Fortunately, the Caimakam's secretary, who spoke French, was an intelligent and civilised individual, and knew that he would best please his chief by treating us with civility; so he did all in his power to atone for the Cadi's inhospitality. It appeared that the Caimakam had gone off with some soldiers in the direction of Mkès or Gadara, to punish the Beni Sukhr Arabs for refusing to pay the sheep-tax, and for resisting the zaptiehs who had gone to collect it, when they fired upon them and wounded one. There seemed to be some uncertainty as to the exact locality in which the Arabs were now to be found; but we were anxious, if possible, to join the Caimakam, and witness the operations against them. While we were in the midst of our consultation a sheikh of the Beni Sukhr arrived, and offered to escort us to his tribe at once. This was rather a suspicious invitation, considering the relations in which one section of it, at all events, stood towards the Government. Still, we might have been tempted to accept it if he would have consented to postpone his departure till the following day, as our horses were too tired to push

on with them at once. This he refused to do, but offered to take a letter to the Caimakam, to whose camp he assured us he was bound, for the purpose of conciliating that functionary, and offering satisfaction for the outrage which had been committed by his tribe. So we gave him a letter begging the Caimakam to let us know at once where we could join him, and the probable date of his return.

There was still enough daylight left for a stroll, and we sallied forth under the guidance of the secretary, and ascended the hill, or rather mound —for it was not a hundred feet high—round the base of which the huts of Irbid are clustered. Here we found the walls partially standing of what had once been a fortress, with trunks of columns strewn about, and the usual indications of the architecture of an ancient civilisation. The mound upon which the castle stands is evidently to a great extent artificial. It is partially faced on the east side by a wall composed of blocks of stone of Cyclopean dimensions. In the highest part these reach an elevation of about thirty feet, and the wall extends for at least a hundred yards. Some of the stones are from fifteen to eighteen feet long, from three to five high, and from eight to ten broad. The view from a dilapidated tower at an angle of the wall, as the sun set over Mount Tabor and the distant mountains of Palestine, was full of interest as well as beauty. We were immediately surrounded by a

fertile undulating country, partially cultivated, but evidently capable of being made in the highest degree productive. To the east and north-east stretched the level corn-growing plains of the Hauran, with the Jebel Druse softly defined in the blue haze of evening. To the north we looked with interest on Tel el Faris, now so familiar to us, with the conical range beyond, extending to the spurs of Hermon, and the prairie country which we had traversed at its base. We even thought we could make out Tel Asherah and the station of Job. To the west the country seemed more rugged, but in places well wooded; while the mountains of Ajlun to the south were heavily timbered to the summits with fine forests. We stood here at an elevation of a little over 2000 feet above the sea-level. The ancient name of Irbid was Arbela. Eusebius mentions it as a city of Gilead, and as being in the district of Pella, beyond Jordan. It may possibly be identical with the Beth-arbel mentioned in Hosea as the scene of a sack and massacre by Shalman (Hos. x. 14). When the Assyrian monarch Shalmaneser came up to attack Samaria, he would naturally have passed through this country; but the notice is too vague to found anything definite upon. There is another Irbid, formerly called Abila, about three miles west of Magdala, on the Sea of Tiberias, and which was doubtless the Abel-meholah, or "meadow of the dance," mentioned in

1 Kings iv. 12, and which has also been supposed to be Beth-arbel; but there seems to be no warrant for this, and it is important to discriminate between Arbel and the numerous places which have Abel for a prefix, signifying plain or meadow, and which have been converted into Abila. One of these, the modern village of Abil, I have already referred to, near the Huleh (p. 21); another is the site of the city of Abila, the capital of the tetrarchy of Abilene, situated in Suk Wady Barada, between Damascus and Baalbec, and the traces of which I saw at a later period; and another is the Abil, situated about two hours and a half distant to the north of the Arbela I was now visiting. This Abil or Abila seems to be identical with the Abel Ceramim, or "plain of the vineyards," mentioned in Judges xi. 33 as the scene of the battle between Jephthah and the children of Ammon, whom he smote "from Aroer, even till thou come to Minnith, even twenty cities, and unto the plain of the vineyards, with a very great slaughter." As Jephthah is said to have passed over Gilead and Manasseh in his pursuit of the Ammonites, and as this city was on the northern borders of Gilead, but in the territory of Manasseh, it may safely be assumed to be the battle-ground in question. This is doubtless the Abila alluded to by Eusebius when he calls it nine miles distant from Ashtaroth Karnaim, it being in reality about fourteen English miles distant

from Tel Asherah, the possible identification of which with Ashtaroth Karnaim I have already indicated. It was one of the cities of the Decapolis, and is further mentioned in another place by the same writer as "Abila the wine-bearing, twelve miles east of Gadara"—a definition so exact as almost to place the matter beyond a doubt. Abila was one of the episcopal cities of Palestine, and was captured by Antiochus the Great, along with Pella and Gadara, in the year 218 B.C., and was first discovered by Seetzen in 1805, who describes it as being situated in the angle of a mountain formed by two bases, the higher slopes of which are full of caverns. The town was completely deserted, but the ruins attest its ancient splendour. Some beautiful remains of the ancient walls were discovered, together with a number of arches and of columns of marble, basalt, and grey granite. On the outside of these walls Mr Seetzen found a great many columns, two of which were of extraordinary magnitude, from which he conceived that there must have been formerly on this spot a temple of considerable magnitude. Mr Wetzstein is, I think, the only traveller who has visited Abil since Seetzen.

The present village of Irbid is the seat of government for the province of Ajlun, and contains a population of about 300 souls. Their dwellings consist generally of one, or at most two rooms, excavated from the side of the hill: the outside

walls are composed of ancient blocks of dolerite stone, on which are often traces of carving; the roofs are flat, and covered with clay, and form the principal lounge of the population, who collect there to gossip and inspect each other's heads. The dogs also seemed to prefer the house-tops to bark from. This semi-subterranean mode of existence was evidently a continuation of the habits of the population from ancient times. We entered the house of one peasant, which was an old dwelling vault. It was a spacious chamber excavated out of the hill, and bearing the marks of extreme antiquity. The front was composed of immense blocks of stone, admirably jointed without cement, the framework of the door was all carved stone; and there were sockets in the lintels and thresholds for pivots to work in, showing that formerly the door was a slab of stone turning on a stone hinge. On many of the stones were inscriptions in Greek, but they were too much effaced to read. The columns of the mosque were old, with carved capitals, but the remains of a Roman or Byzantine civilisation were comparatively modern. The real interest which attached to these hoary relics was one which connected them with the race anterior to that whose traces were self-evident.

It is highly probable that the Jefuides and Ghassanides — the Arab emigrants from Yemen, who occupied this country for the first five centuries of

the Christian era, who adopted Christianity, and attained a certain degree of civilisation — lived in these stone dwellings, and left their words carved in Greek on the stones; but it is not likely that they were the first to introduce this remarkable and unique style of habitation, of which, so far as I am aware, we have no traces in the region in the south of Arabia, from which they migrated. It seems more probable that they imitated the structure of the dwellings which had been the abodes of that ancient people who astonished the Israelites by the hugeness of their stature and the substantiality of their cities, if they did not actually adopt them, as Dr Porter supposes. In this very region we are told "that giants dwelt in old time; and the Ammonites call them Zamzummims; a people great, and many, and tall, as the Anakims" (Deut. ii. 20, 21). This was "the coast of Og, King of Bashan which was the remnant of the giants that dwelleth at Ashtaroth and at Edrei," of whose sixty cities it is said that "they were fenced with high walls, gates, and bars;" and again, they are described as "threescore great cities with gates and brazen bars" (1 Kings iv. 13). It is not likely that all traces of them should have disappeared before the arrival of the Ghassanides, but more probable that the latter adapted themselves to the mode of life and dwelling that they found in their new country; and it is by no means impossible that many of the

massive blocks amongst which we stood, and which now sheltered the miserable population of Irbid, had been originally hewn by the possessors of the land more than three thousand years ago.

As the same Hebrew word is sometimes rendered "Rephaim," sometimes "giants," and sometimes "dead," it has been suggested that the Rephaim were troglodytes, and hence that they came to be identified with the dead. That these excavations should have impressed the invading Israelites as far more resembling tombs than dwellings is in the highest degree probable, for the traveller nowadays has no small difficulty in distinguishing one from the other; and it is very possible, therefore, that when they saw their enemies rising apparently out of the earth, the Jews should have given them the name which, according to Gesenius, may mean "buried giants." At the same time, I think with Freshfield and others, that it is a decided misnomer to call these stone villages, which were undoubtedly built by the Ghassanide Arabs after the Christian era, "giant cities," if by that term it is intended to assume that they were the identical cities built by the Rephaim.

There were a few Christians at Irbid, but the greater part of the population were Mussulman. There was nothing, however, in their dress or appearance to distinguish the professors of one religion from those of the other, or from the sur-

rounding Bedouins. The women wore the single robe like a night-gown, and left their faces uncovered; and the men wore the *abeih* or Arab cloak, and *kufeiyeh* or head-dress, but their general aspect was ragged and uncouth. We were assured that on retiring to rest at night it was the custom of both sexes to dispense altogether with their garments, and to sleep in primitive simplicity. There seems to be no trace of religious fanaticism amongst them, but, on the contrary, a tendency on the part of the professors of both religions to assimilate as much as possible their domestic habits and customs. Thus it is not an uncommon thing for a Christian to have two wives. I know that this is an assertion likely to be disputed: but I took some trouble in verifying it, and upon a future occasion met a man who assured me that he had been married again, while still living with his first wife, by the Greek priest; and he mentioned the names of several others similarly situated, and appealed to the bystanders to confirm his statements. Living in daily proximity with Mohammedans, who are constantly in the habit of supplementing their wives, and being removed from the supervision of a large Christian community, it is possible in these out-of-the-way places, where the Christians sometimes are in a great minority, and there is often no resident priest, that they find it difficult to resist the force of example. Then the priest, when it comes to his

knowledge, is puzzled what to do, if the man resolutely refuses to put either his first wife or the later addition away. So, as the less of the two evils, and possibly stimulated thereto by a small pecuniary gratification, he makes things square, so far as in him lies, by a marriage ceremony; and the bigamist feels more at ease in his conscience, while probably the priest does not think it necessary to mention so trifling a circumstance to his bishop. From all I could learn, this is an irregularity confined to the Christian Arab population to the east of the Jordan.

Civilisation had actually attained to such a pitch at Irbid that there was an attempt at education; and we looked in at the schoolroom, where there was a portal with an old inscription on it, and the children came trooping out to kiss our hands, after the manner of the juvenile population in these parts generally. Just below the village there was a large oblong tank, evidently very old. Some portions of the well-built walls were still remaining, while around it were strewn some sarcophagi of basalt, with sculptured figures and garlands in bas-relief upon them. The Caimakam was having some new houses built, or rather partially excavated, which were intended to be shops; and there were a few stores in which the Arab necessaries of life were to be obtained. His own house was almost the only one which had been built throughout. It stood in

a courtyard, and consisted of two rooms, of which one was his bedroom, while we occupied the other. Here we received sundry visits from the two or three functionaries who assisted him in his administration. Among others, was the officer in command of the zaptiehs. He was a Tunisian, had been at the siege of Kars, and was very proud of the medal which he wore commemorating that event, and spoke of his experience of English officers on that occasion in terms which were highly complimentary to them.

We had decided to wait at Irbid until we received an answer to our letter from the Caimakam, and, in order to fill up the time, rode over to the village of Beit-Ras, at which, we were told, there were some ruins. It was only about three miles distant to the north, and situated on a high hill of chalk and limestone. The intervening country was fairly cultivated with wheat and lentils. Here we found the remains of what had once been a temple of some importance. It was approached from the east by a colonnade, more than 200 yards in length, of basalt columns, only the bases of which were visible, while their fragments lay strewn on both sides in great profusion. This was probably the *via recta* or main street of the town. A carved archway forming one of the entrances to the temple was still standing, and near it was a singular excavation 100 yards long by 20 yards broad, and about 15 in depth. Opening into this were large vaulted chambers,

which may in old times have served either as dwellings or as storehouses. At present they were inhabited by the natives, who penned their sheep in some, lived themselves in others, or had constructed for themselves huts out of the fragments of columns and carved capitals and architraves with which the place was strewn. It is not impossible that in old time the whole of this excavation was roofed over and formed a subterranean dwelling; otherwise one scarcely sees how it could have been kept free from water. Indeed my first impression, until I saw the vaulted chambers opening on to the floor, was that it had originally been intended as a reservoir. This clearly could not have been the case; and the probability is that the columns, of which the fragments remain strewn on the floor, once supported a stone roof. A little distance from the temple to the west, are the remains of an aqueduct and a bath. Here were two stone slabs on which two eagles were carved, both in excellent preservation, and measuring three feet between the tips of their wings. The whole population of Beit-Ras, which consisted of some forty or fifty souls, who all lived in the excavation, were very puzzled and interested in our proceedings, and followed us most good-humouredly about, trying to discover why we were so attentively examining the old stones amid which they lived. At last a bright thought seemed to strike one of them, and he

beckoned to us to follow him down the side of the hill. After going about a hundred yards, he stopped at a hole which was apparently the entrance to a cave, and invited us to crawl in. The aperture was so small, that in order to achieve this feat we had to lie down and wriggle our bodies through the opening. I doubt whether a very stout man could have succeeded in squeezing through. But once inside, we found ourselves in a circular chamber about twenty feet in diameter, supported by a column in the centre, which had been cut out of the limestone rock. As we saw that there were passages leading out of this room, we sat down and sent for lights.

The Arabs were highly delighted at this indication of our intention to continue our exploration, and soon returned with some feeble lamps. Following a short passage which turned off to the left, we entered a room in which was a carved slab of stone that seemed to have been used as a door. The aperture which it may possibly once have closed, was now built up. We therefore returned to the first chamber, and made our way along a passage about four feet high and three broad, which opened on the right. This was in places partially blocked with fallen earth, and the heat was stifling. There were niches cut in the sides about a foot apart, apparently for purposes of illumination. After following this gallery for nearly

fifty yards, we entered another chamber similar to those we had already seen. Out of this another passage led to the right. The opening to it, however, was nearly choked with fallen earth, and we could only have entered it by great exertion and uncomfortable squeezing. Near it was another entrance, which had been completely built up with large blocks of stone, and at its base was a passage, descending apparently into the bowels of the earth by a flight of steps, which, however, were so covered with earth as to make any attempt at descent impossible. We might, perhaps, have scrambled into the passage on the right; but by this time we were streaming with perspiration, our lamps were growing dim, and the sensation which we had once or twice experienced of sticking in a hole, without any positive certainty whether one could squeeze through it or not, was so disagreeable, that we were not tempted to pursue our investigations, more especially as the result would probably have been a series of corridors and chambers similar to those we had already explored. As far as we went, the passage was leading steadily uphill, and in the direction of the temple at the top of it, so that it is not improbable that this was a subterranean means of communication between the temple and the outside of the town. The whole place is well worthy of a far more thorough examination than we were able to give it; and so far as I am aware, the excavations have not been described by

any previous traveller, while there can be no doubt from their position that the ruins are those of the city of Capitolias, mentioned in the 'Itinerary' of Antoninus as being between Neve and Gadara, sixteen miles from the latter, and thirty-eight from the former. Capitolias, which must have been a place of some importance, is placed, in the Peutinger tables, at sixteen Roman miles from Gadara, and the same from Adraha, the modern Der'a. This would exactly locate it at Beit-Ras. It was an ancient episcopal city, and was the connecting-point of the two great Roman roads, one of which led from the west, eastwards through the Hauran, to Bozra and the Euphrates—and the other from the north, southwards to Gerasa or Jerash, and Rabboth Ammon or Philadelphia, traces of which still remain.

We sat down near the Roman bath to rest after our labours, and the peasants brought us coffee, and seemed quite delighted with the novelty and excitement of our visit. They were an amiable, harmless race, and refused, with some indignation, the money we offered them for the trouble they had taken to show us the cave, and the coffee they gave us afterwards. A few more British tourists to Beit-Ras will soon cure them of this ignorance of the world, and initiate them into the manners of their countrymen elsewhere. It seemed a greater discovery to find a native of Palestine who did not know the meaning of the word *backsheesh*, than it was to identify

the site of an ancient city. While we were enjoying the magnificent view which we obtained from the top of the hill, which is the highest point of the surrounding country, we suddenly became aware of a cavalcade winding along the valley at our feet. This consisted of a *posse* of soldiers, some of them mounted on mules; half-a-dozen Bedouin prisoners with their hands tied behind their backs; twelve donkeys and twenty sheep, the spoils of the Caimakam's raid on the Beni Sukhr, and a certain indication that he might soon be expected at Irbid. We therefore wended our way back to that village without delay, and arrived almost at the same moment as the Caimakam. We found that the letter we had sent him had been returned to Irbid without having been delivered, the courage of the sheikh having failed him. It was now evident that he was anxious for us to accompany him in order that we might act as intercessors; but that, failing our personal presence, he had deemed it the safest course to keep out of the Caimakam's way altogether, and to retire into the recesses of the desert.

We found the Caimakam an exceptionally zealous and intelligent functionary. He had travelled in Europe, spoke French and a little English, and seemed quite determined to introduce reform and good government into his district. His account of the origin of his dispute with the Arabs furnished

a characteristic illustration of the nature of the abuses with which he had to grapple. It seemed that a member of the local Medjliss, or provincial council, had assumed to himself the functions of tax-gatherer, and had been in the habit, without proper authority, of collecting the sheep-tax from the Arabs. The method of his procedure was not an uncommon one in these parts, and was modelled very much on that of the unjust steward. He allowed the Arabs to make a return of about half the sheep they really owned, on condition that they paid him the tax on the other half, and insured them against any further trouble in the matter. Half of this he gave the Government, and the other half he kept himself, bribing troublesome colleagues or superiors to keep their mouths shut. The Government, by these means, was robbed of three-quarters of the tax. The present Caimakam, on discovering the fraud, determined to put a stop to it, and warned the Arabs that they were not to pay the sheep-tax except to the zaptiehs whom he would send to collect it. This warning the member of the Medjliss, who was a rich and influential man, persuaded them to disregard; and when the zaptiehs were sent, the Arabs not only refused to pay the tax, but fired upon them. The Caimakam upon this instantly started himself, with about a hundred men of an infantry regiment mounted on mules—a most useful corps for the purpose for which it is now being used in these provinces—sur-

prised the Arabs by night, and seized the spoil which we had seen brought into Beit-Ras. He calculated that he had captured enough to pay the tax, and he intended to keep his prisoners as hostages until certain members of the tribe, who were the ringleaders in the resistance, and had taken the most active share in it, should be brought in.

The Beni Sukhr, or "Children of the Rock," are notorious for their predatory propensities, and have long been the terror of travellers to the east of the Jordan—demanding heavy black-mail, and ruthlessly plundering all who do not consent to pay it. It was most fortunate for us that they had just received this chastisement, as it insured our safety in the country through which we were about to travel, and which, under ordinary circumstances, can never be traversed except under their escort. They had now betaken themselves to the deserts to the east of the Hadj road; and so far as they were concerned, we were pretty secure, though of course there were other tribes to be taken into consideration.

We had a great deal of most interesting conversation with the Caimakam on the subject of the Arabs, his experience of them having been very extensive. It was his opinion — as, indeed, it is of every intelligent man who has any knowledge of the subject—that the country to the east of the Jordan could easily be brought into order if the pilgrimage to Mecca by the Hadj road from Damascus was dis-

continued. This is a drain upon the Government, in one form or other, of nearly £100,000 a-year, of which a very large proportion goes into the pockets of the Arabs, who supply the camels, and who are paid black-mail. If any attempt is made to reduce them to order or punish their robberies, they retaliate on the Government by refusing to supply camels to the Hadj, or by delaying its passage at points where it is comparatively defenceless until the requisite amount is paid, to atone for whatever grievance they may consider that they have against the authorities. This gives them a sense of independence which makes them extremely difficult to manage; but if they were once deprived of the opportunity which is thus afforded them of putting a screw on the Government, they are so dependent for pasturage, at certain seasons of the year, on lands which are completely under military control, that they would be obliged to submit to discipline.

I am now only speaking of those tribes who infest Palestine immediately east of the Jordan. Of course, the traveller who wishes to explore the country to the east of the Hauran, where it is not possible to send troops, and where the influence of the Hadj, as a means of levying black-mail, does not exist, would find the other tribes as lawless as ever; but they do not, to so great an extent, prevent a rich and productive country from being developed by honest industry, as is the case in Jaulan, Ajlun, and the Belka.

Once expelled from here, the tribes might be left to roam over their deserts, and fight among themselves for its oases, without seriously retarding the prosperity of the country. It may with safety be predicted that the abolition of the Hadj would before very long lead to the redemption of eastern Palestine from its present desolate condition.[1]

The Anazeh are by far the most powerful tribe between the Jordan and the Euphrates, control an area of about 40,000 square miles, and can bring over 100,000 horsemen and camel-drivers into the field. They are divided into four great tribes, each of which, in its turn, is subdivided. The Wulid Ali are those who most commonly make raids into the country east of the Jordan, fighting occasionally with the Beni Sukhr, and supplying the largest number of camels to the Hadj. Their sheikh is generally a man wielding considerable influence at Damascus; indeed, many of the Arab sheikhs either pass some of their time in that city themselves, or have their representatives there.

One of the most interesting of the tribes on the Syrian border is the Roala, amongst whom the Caimakam had lived. He told us that they alone still retained the famous war-cradle, which all the

[1] Since the above was written, I hear that the Government have decided to discontinue the Hadj from Damascus. This measure guarantees security for life and property to the east of the Jordan, provided the local officials are active and efficient functionaries.

tribes once possessed. It is a sort of car, called "uttfa," composed of ostrich-feathers; and before the tribe goes to war, the most lovely girl in it is selected, and placed, in the lightest possible attire, in the cradle, which is then put on the back of a camel. The silken string by which the camel is led is then placed in her hand, and the warriors of the tribe pass before her. Whoever she selects as the leader of the camel becomes the leader of the host, which she accompanies, and is a prominent figure in the battles. If, in the war which follows, the tribe is beaten and the war-cradle captured, it is deprived for ever after of the privilege of possessing one. The Roala are the only tribe who still retain this singular distinction; but one or two Arabs whom I afterwards spoke to on the subject, told me they were not likely ever to lose it, as they never now perform the ceremony, or risk the capture of the cradle in battle.

CHAPTER V.

KURDISH ZAPTIEHS—THE REFORM PROBLEM—REVENUE OF AJLUN —ITS RESOURCES—FROM IRBID TO GADARA—WOODED COUNTRY —RUINS OF GADARA—THE BATHS OF AMATHA—A GOOD SPECULATION—THE WADY ARABA—NIGHT QUARTERS AT KEFR ASSAD —THE FRONTIER OF GAD—DOLMENS—MAHANAIM—THE PURSUIT OF JEPHTHAH—THE SCENE OF ABSALOM'S DEATH—DENSE FORESTS—THE MOUNTAINS AND VILLAGE OF AJLUN.

WE left Irbid furnished with a circular letter from the Caimakam to the village authorities of his district, and under the escort of two Kurdish zaptiehs, who did not by any means turn out either intelligent guides or agreeable companions. The problem of a local police force doubtless presents many difficulties in a country where there is nothing to pay them with, and their only chance of a livelihood consists in robbing the very people whose predatory propensities they are supposed to check. A couple of Kurdish zaptiehs with flowing *kufeiyeh* and *abeih*, their loose trousers stuffed into high buff-coloured boots, armed with pistol, dagger, and carbine, dashing into a village on their fiery little Arabs, throw a whole population into consternation; the men cringe and fawn, the children run screaming to

their mothers, who cower tremblingly before the unwelcome visitors. These latter look perfect specimens of brigands themselves, and behave with far less consideration than the ordinary robber, who tries to be popular with the peasantry, and neither pillages nor oppresses them more than is absolutely necessary. The zaptieh, secure in his official position, does both with impunity. The villagers hasten to conciliate him by placing before him food and lodging of the best, however long his visit may last. Both he and his horse are provided for at the village expense, and woe betide the sheikh if there is any stint in the supplies. Sometimes a party of these worthies, sent to punish some refractory hamlet, quarter themselves upon it indefinitely, and are only bought off at a great sacrifice to the unhappy peasantry. We were perpetually obliged to check the arbitrary behaviour of the men we had with us, and I shuddered to think of the possible brutality of one of our zaptiehs when alone—he was such an unmitigated ruffian, even under the restraint of our presence. He had been a Bashi-Bazouk in Beatson's Horse during the Crimean war, and accused the British officers of the most impossible crimes and misconduct—a pretty clear evidence that his own behaviour had been such as to necessitate a discipline which he had avenged by libels ever since. Unfortunately he required a great deal more to reform him, and the fear of losing his *backsheesh*

was the only check on the exuberance of his insolence. This was not the style of man who would go out of his way to show us a ruin, or even facilitate the execution of plans we had already determined on; indeed, the great delight of his life seemed to be to thwart them, and to take us in the opposite direction from the one we wished to go. This man was not a solitary specimen of his class. We had experience altogether of eight different zaptiehs, and the best of them was only somewhat less of a ruffian than the other seven. Until the Government is in a position to pay its police force sufficient to maintain themselves and their horses, there can be little doubt that the inhabitants would enjoy greater peace and security if there were no police at all. At all events, it would be better to try and raise them in the country in which they were to be used, a plan most successfully adopted in the Lebanon, instead of importing them from Kurdistan, where the instincts of the inhabitants are more lawless and predatory than in any other part of Turkey.

The two classes of individuals from whom the peasantry suffer are the tithe-farmers and the zaptiehs. The former rob both the country-people and the Government; and the whole system of tax-collection is one that lends itself to an elaborate system of fraud, which extends to the governor-general of the province, if that functionary is

open to corruption, as is too often the case. The zaptieh is the natural ally of the tithe-farmer in cases where the peasantry resist the exactions of the latter. It is the greatest mistake to suppose that the Christian peasant is more the victim of these plunderers than the Moslem. Tithe-farmers and zaptiehs are thoroughly impartial; and in cases where foreign consuls are in the neighbourhood, the Moslem suffers far more than the Christian, who can generally manage to get some protection. While the administrative system of Turkey is thoroughly corrupt and inherently vicious, there are no better laws in any country, if they were properly applied. It is no less a mistake to suppose that Turks are not as anxious as Christians to see reforms introduced which should give effect to them. The great difficulty with which the reforming Pasha has to contend, and there are many honest and patriotic men of this class, is the control which a demoralised bureaucracy, —composed largely of Christians, who are the worst element in it, as well as of Turks,—have obtained in all the departments of State at Constantinople. The vested interests which attach to existing abuses are so powerful, and the abuses themselves are so deep-rooted, that without the assistance and support of popular chambers at the seat of Government, and a comparatively autonomous administrative system in the provinces, no statesman with any regard for his own reputation would attempt to cope with them.

In the case of the tithe-farmers, for instance, who are a very influential class, they would put all their influence in motion to resist any alteration of a *régime* under which they thrive. And, unfortunately, there are too many high officials whose interests are more or less bound up with theirs. If, instead of selling the *dime* by auction to speculators and money-lenders, the Government were periodically to assess the villages, and the taxes were collected by authorised officials, each province could be made to yield a revenue out of which a satisfactory local police force could be maintained. And if, in addition to this, the various governors-general were appointed for a term of years instead of being constantly liable to change, were invested with greater independent powers, and each province allowed a greater voice in its own administration, abuses could be reformed with which, under the present centralised system, it is extremely difficult to grapple. So far as the peasantry, both Christian and Moslem, are concerned, they desire no other reform, and would be perfectly contented if they were freed from the presence of the imported zaptieh, and the collection of the taxes were put upon a sound and permanent basis.

The whole amount of the revenue at present collected from the province of Ajlun, which is a most fertile region about forty miles long by twenty-five in width, is only £7000 a-year, of which

a considerable proportion is paid by nomad Arabs The plains are capable of producing the most magnificent crops of wheat and other cereals; beans and lentils of all sorts grow in abundance. Its wine and olive bearing capacity is proverbial from old time; its mountains are heavily timbered and abundantly watered; and upon its meadows the tribes of Gad and Manasseh in old time pastured their flocks. It formed the northern portion of that land of Gilead whose attractions proved so irresistible to them, that they ceased to continue their march northwards and take possession of the country which was originally designed to form part of the heritage of Israel. It subsequently maintained a large population, and was a most valuable province under the Romans, when it was considered to form part of the Perea, and contained several of those ten cities whose renown earned for the region in which they were situated the name of Decapolis. Unlike the country to the west of the Jordan, it has retained all its productive capacity, and only needs a settled population and good government to develop resources which are as abundant as ever. Yet, out of seventy-five villages in Ajlun, fifteen are deserted, and the entire population of the remaining sixty is certainly under 20,000. There can be no question that the province is capable of abundantly satisfying the necessities of ten times that number. I feel no moral

doubt that £50,000, partly expended judiciously in bribes at Constantinople, and partly applied to the purchase of land not belonging to the State from its present proprietors, would purchase the entire province, and could be made to return a fabulous interest on the investment.

On leaving Irbid we rode in a west-north-westerly direction, and after traversing rich arable land for about an hour, reached the high stony plateau which divides the Yarmuk from the plains of Gilead. Here clumps of trees began to grow in the spaces between the flat rocks, and the character of the country underwent a marked change. Deep gullies intersected this ridge of limestone, which was by no means destitute of soil, and admirably adapted to the culture of the vine; but it was now devoid of population, and until we reached the neighbourhood of Hebras, the capital of this district, which is now called El Kafarat, we saw no sign of life. We passed this village without entering it, as to do so we should have been obliged to make a detour of a mile, owing to the conformation of the country. There can be no doubt that many interesting remains are to be found in this almost unknown section of country, but my object was not so much to look for ruins as to examine the topographical features of the country, with a view to a possible line of railway along the valley of Yarmuk. From what I already

saw, the indications were in the highest degree unfavourable.

The necessity of dividing our day's journey, in a country where the population was so sparse, in such a manner as to insure us some sort of accommodation at night, made exploration more difficult than if we could have pitched a tent where we chose; but this, again, would have involved so much extra conveyance for food and baggage, that the one inconvenience was more than counterbalanced by the other. We had, moreover, far better opportunities of seeing the inhabitants and judging of the actual condition of the country by living amongst them as we did, than if we had followed the ordinary custom of travellers, and isolated ourselves in our tents, limiting our contact with them to intercourse through a dragoman. About mid-day we entered a beautiful gorge, the sides of which were thickly clothed with prickly oak, carob or locust-bean, wild almond, terebinth, and other trees; the air was fragrant with the blossom of the wild jasmine; and we lunched at a copious spring which issued from a cave in the limestone,—a spot of ideal beauty. A hill a little beyond this point was pointed out to us by the zaptiehs as the scene of the Caimakam's recent raid upon the Arabs, who had now disappeared from this part of the country. Keeping a somewhat more westerly direction, we passed several caves which had formerly been used as

dwellings. One of these we entered for about thirty yards; it was a spacious grotto, and at its farther extremity the ceiling had been pierced, probably for purposes of ventilation and as an outlet for smoke. These became more numerous as we approached Gadara. The first indication of our proximity to these interesting ruins were the traces of the old Roman road, where the ruts of the chariot-wheels were deeply marked, and numerous sarcophagi lay strewn thickly on either side, most of them decorated with garlands and busts; those which are still under shelter in the tombs forming convenient repositories in which the natives store their grain. There are said to be two hundred sarcophagi, many of them in an excellent state of preservation, scattered among the ruins of the ancient city. But one is even more struck by the quantity of tombs than of the stone coffins which have been dragged out of many of them. The whole surface of the ground is so honeycombed with these that it looks like a rabbit-warren. Many of the stone doors still swing on their hinges in the massive basalt framework—or rather would, if the mould which now clogs them were removed. These were the tombs in which it is supposed that the maniac lived who "had devils long time, and ware no clothes, neither abode in any house, but in the tombs," and who was healed by our Lord.

The objection to this theory is, that from the city

of Gadara to the nearest point of the Sea of Galilee is about eight miles as the crow flies. As the Sea is nearly 2000 feet below the level of the city, it must have been a good deal farther by the road. In the account in Luke it is said "that when He went forth to land, there met Him out of the city a certain man," &c. This is confirmed by Mark, who says that "when He was come out of the ship, *immediately* there met Him out of the tombs a man with an unclean spirit," which would not have been possible if the tombs were ten or twelve miles distant from the landing-place; nor could the description of the swine running down a steep place into the sea be made to apply to Gadara. Indeed, though both evangelists state the miracle to have been performed in the country of the Gadarenes, the city is nowhere mentioned in the Bible; and the hypothesis of Thomson that the locality was Gergesa, the modern Kersa, which is situated near the steepest slope on the banks of the sea, is far more plausible. In Matthew's account of the miracle it is called "the country of the Gergesenes;" and it is possible that Gadara, which was the capital of the Perea, may have included Gergesa in its jurisdiction, and that the definition which placed it in the land of Gadarenes would not be altogether inaccurate.

The *fellahin* often use these tombs for dwellings as well as granaries; and one can well understand a maniac finding in them all the shelter he needed.

Many of the stone frames into which the doors were fitted were elaborately carved. The principal street can still be traced by fragments of columns and remains of its colonnade, and one theatre is in a fair state of preservation—twelve rows of seats were perfect for three-quarters of the way round, but the lower six were nearly all destroyed,—still I should scarcely venture to dispute the practical observation of Mr Merill, the American explorer, who remarks "that it could be made ready for use again, at an expense of a few thousand dollars!" The other theatre was about 300 yards distant, and much less complete. From both magnificent views could be obtained. The valley of the Jordan, with Scythopolis, the modern Beisan, formerly the capital of the Decapolis, in the midst of it, lay spread out at our feet, with the mountains of Palestine beyond, while the wooded range of Jebel Ajlun shut in the prospect to the south.

We looked down into the Yarmuk, 1500 feet below us, winding between precipitous cliffs of limestone and basalt, and circling round a meadow of the brightest green, which seemed almost in the bed of the river, in the midst of which bubbled the warm springs of Amatha. These are four in number, and have a temperature of 115°, 103°, 92°, and 83° Fahrenheit, and are strongly impregnated with sulphur. The Arabs have a profound belief in their virtues, and they are consequently regarded by them as

neutral ground. I once met a Turkish official who assured me that he had derived great benefit from baths at Amatha, though I could get no definite account from him as to where he lived while he was performing his cure, as there is not a vestige of a house in the neighbourhood, and he said he had no tent—possibly in a tomb. The basin of the largest spring is sixty yards in length by thirty in width, with an average depth of six feet. We did not attempt to scramble down to them, but contented ourselves with inspecting them through our opera-glasses. These baths have quite recently been carefully examined by Mr Merill, who found a theatre, many "ruins of a superior description, and several elegant stone chairs, with backs two and a half feet high," besides other traces indicating that in former times Amatha must have been a place of great luxury as well as a sanitarium. There seems to be no reason why it should not become so again. A good road could easily be made from the baths to Nazareth, distant only twenty-five miles, across an almost level country. An excellent carriage-road now connects Nazareth with Haifa, and Amatha could thus be brought within an easy day's drive of the best port upon the coast of Palestine. If a hotel and bathing-houses were erected here, it could not fail to become a popular and frequented winter's resort for European valetudinarians. Surrounded by the most romantic scenery, and invested with

associations of exceptional interest, it is only a few miles from the Lake of Tiberias, and lies in the immediate neighbourhood of the ruined cities of Gamala, Hippos, Aphek, Gadara, and Scythopolis, to say nothing of others still to be discovered.

Indeed, one can scarcely imagine a spot combining a greater number of attractions which are so accessible and yet so little known. Here the health-seeker might vary the pleasures of picnic excursions into the picturesque forest-clad mountains of Gilead, with the more serious occupation of excavating the buried treasures of the cities of the Decapolis, and exhuming the monuments of a departed civilisation, or refresh himself after his archæological labours with the excitement of wild boar, gazelle, and partridge shooting, or with abundant fishing in the Jordan, the Yarmuk, and the Lake. Situated about 500 feet below the level of the Mediterranean, the climate in winter resembles that of the Jordan valley, and is eminently adapted for the invalid; while the springs themselves have doubtless retained the healing qualities which once rendered them so famous, and are unique in volume and extent. Mr Merill describes one pond, which the sulphur stream has worn into the rock—a hundred yards in length by ten or fifteen in width, with a depth of ten feet—in which the temperature is 98°. The stream, on issuing from this pool, falls over the rock into the river below, forming a beautiful cascade. The whole volume of water,

gushing from the three springs combined, would form a single stream twenty-one feet wide by twenty inches in depth, with a rapid foaming current.

But the most attractive objects in the neighbourhood are the hot springs, and tropical valley at 'Mkhaibeh, and the Fountain of the Brides, which are thus described by Mr Merill[1]: "About one hour up the valley, east of El Hamma (Amatha), there is another beautiful plain called 'Mkhaibeh. In this case the plain is on the south side of the river, which flows at the very base of the mountains, to the north of it. The Arabs praise this place for its palms and vines. The plain is watered by a sulphur spring of immense size, which has a temperature of 112°, and I estimate the volume of water flowing from it to be nearly equal to that from the three sulphur springs of El Hamma combined. This warm fertilising water has made this valley a tropical paradise. I counted here eighteen different tropical trees and shrubs, and I am certain there are more. It is almost impossible to penetrate the immense jungle, while above the tangled mass of vegetation there rise two hundred graceful palms — the whole, as one looks down upon it from the neighbouring hills, forming one of the most beautiful landscapes in Syria. Here and at El Hamma there are three mills that are run by water at a temperature of over

[1] Palestine Exploration Society. Fourth Statement. New York: January 1877.

100°. About a mile east of 'Mkhaibeh, and on the same side of the river, there is a beautiful little lake of cool sweet water, called Birket El Araies, or Fountain of the Brides. It has no outlet or inlet, is nearly circular, and I was twenty-five minutes in walking round it. Ducks and some other water-fowl are found here, and the gentle slopes about the lake are green, and afford excellent pasture for the flocks of the Bedouin."

The Mandhur Arabs who people the valley of the Yarmuk are a peaceful tribe much given to agricultural pursuits, and could be easily dealt with. A comparatively small sum, paid as black-mail, which, to avoid that invidious term, might be called rent, would insure a peaceable tenure of the springs to any enterprising capitalists who might be disposed to undertake the operation of turning Amatha into a watering-place, which, indeed, would be very much to the advantage of the natives, who would derive, incidentally, an abundant revenue from visitors and tourists. A more dangerous foe would be the Beni Sukhr, who, however, have no prescriptive right to the valley, and who could easily be kept in check, if it were not thought desirable to pay them, by the police and military force at the disposal of the Caimakam at Irbid. With a functionary as active and energetic as the present occupant of the office, there would be no danger on this score.

It is remarkable, considering that the Yarmuk is

the most important affluent of the Jordan, that it watered the territory of Gad and of the half-tribe of Manasseh, and must have played an important part in the campaigns of Israel, that it should never once be mentioned in the Bible.

Gadara, which stands on a lofty projecting spur between the Yarmuk and the gorge or Wady of the Araba, is destitute of water, and was supplied by the aqueduct which we crossed at Es Sal, and which is led from the head-waters of the Yarmuk. The ruins cover an area of about two miles in circumference; and the city must have been a place of imposing grandeur, alike from the magnificence of its situation as from the splendour of its public edifices. There seems to be no indication of its having been a Jewish city of any importance prior to its celebrity as a centre of Roman civilisation. The first historical notice we have of it is its capture by Antiochus the Great in the year 218 B.C., and the last is when it became the residence of the Bishop of Palæstina Secunda.

We had been able to obtain no definite information as to the accommodation we were likely to find at this place, but we were assured that it was inhabited. To our dismay we found that the three huts which had once contained the entire population were now abandoned from fear of the Arabs, and that there was no sign of life visible. When we looked at what might have been our accommodation, we were consoled; for the abodes of the inhabitants of Ga-

dara—or Mkès, as it is now called—were a combination of den and hovel which a respectable pig would have scorned. They no doubt abounded in vermin; and even had there been food and water procurable, we should have preferred sleeping in the open air to risking a bed amid the filth with which the floor was strewn. The food question was, however, paramount, and the necessity of reaching a village of some sort before dark compelled us to curtail our investigations of this interesting locality—which, however, since its first discovery by Seetzen in 1805, has been frequently visited, so that there is nothing new left for the explorer but excavation, for which he would doubtless be amply repaid.

We now turned our horses' heads southwards, and plunged into the Wady Araba, descending about 1500 feet in an hour, by a narrow path worn out of the chalk cliffs, which wound down ravines and along the edge of precipices till it reached the torrent at the bottom, foaming between banks fringed with oleanders. Here there was a most picturesquely-situated old mill, with a wild Arab family as its only occupants, whose intelligence was so limited that we had great difficulty in getting directions from them as to our future route. The Kurdish zaptiehs, who are not, as a rule, very profound Arabic scholars, of course misunderstood them; and the result was that, after scrambling up the opposite side of the Wady for an hour, we lost our way.

It was now getting dusk, but we followed the best indication of a path we could find, hoping it would lead us somewhere before it became too dark for us to see it.

Meantime I had plenty of opportunity of judging of the engineering facilities of the country; and I came to the conclusion that to attempt to bring a railway from the valley of the Jordan to the plateau of Ajlun and the Hauran by way either of the Yarmuk or the Wady Araba, would be attended with difficulties of too formidable a nature to make it desirable as a future line. There are some wadies farther to the south which I had not an opportunity of examining; but my impression is, that it will be found that the easiest way of reaching this plateau will be by following up the valley of the Jordan to the Huleh, and then ascending the right bank to the plains of Jaulan near Kuneitereh, from whence the line could be taken, without further trouble, to Damascus, with a branch, if desirable, to the Hauran.

We had climbed for nearly two hours before we could look back upon Mkès from the other side of the valley, and found that we had attained its altitude. We had now reached the plateau, and saw signs of cultivation, which cheered our spirits; and as the night was closing in upon us, came upon some olive-groves, and heard the barking of dogs—a most welcome sound, though hostile in its intent.

We were not very cordially received by the in-

habitants of Kefr Assad, or "the happy village," as the name signifies. Perhaps this may have been owing to the presence of the zaptiehs—possibly it may have been simply fear and amazement at being called upon, for the first time in their lives, to entertain strangers of such a type. There were not, probably, 100 souls in all in the group of huts among which we were to choose our shelter for the night; and these latter differed so little in appearance, that it was difficult to say which offered the best prospect of comfort,—so we left the selection to the zaptiehs, and they informed the best-to-do householder that he was to be our host, whether he liked it or not. A description of our quarters will apply to all the other abodes in the village. A circular stone-and-mud wall, about six feet high, enclosed the entire establishment. This was entered by a gateway wide enough to admit a horse, and barricaded at night with two or three bars. Inside this enclosure, and adjoining the wall, so as to leave a yard in the centre, there were on the right, on entering, first, two detached little rooms, occupied by the owner and his family; then a raised stage of mud, two or three feet above the yard, on which was an erection of boughs of trees, forming a sort of shelter under which they slept in the heat of summer; then a long shed or stable—now empty—for cattle; then an open pen, in which were two donkeys; and lastly, bringing us back to the entrance-gate, and completing the circle, an immense

oven with a domed roof, and a huge fire in a hole in the floor in the centre. The domestic circle of our host consisted of two wives, a grown-up daughter, and some small children, including a baby. These all turned into one room, leaving us sole possessors of the other, which was a small apartment, about ten feet square, partly excavated and partly built of stone, plastered with mud and cow-dung. The entrance was a hole three feet high, destitute of a door, through which came the entire supply of light and air, as there were neither windows nor chimney. The mud-floor having been sprinkled with water and swept by the women, they spread mats upon it, and we pushed a bush into the doorway, with which to make a barricade against the invasion in the night of two or three savage dogs who inhabited the yard, and whom we found it impossible to conciliate. There was an air of extreme poverty in the whole establishment, but the women were willing and anxious to make us comfortable. Although Moslems, they seemed to have no thought of covering their faces, which, however, were by no means attractive. Our cook, the invaluable Hanna, was soon engaged in making the chicken stew, in which he was a proficient. Indeed his faculty for turning out a creditable dinner on the extremely limited resources of a small Arab village was something remarkable. In addition to meat of some kind, generally poultry, we were usually able to obtain rice, sour-milk, or *leben*

—a most refreshing native preparation—and eggs. These we supplemented with our own cheese, olives, and dates; while, as a beverage, coffee was always procurable.

Altogether, though our accommodation at Kefr Assad was somewhat squalid in its character, we were disposed, after dinner, to take a contented view of life; and after barricading our door and spreading our blankets on the floor, looked forward with some satisfaction to a well-earned night's rest—a delusion which, unhappily, was soon dispelled; for no sooner had the sounds of the day died away, and the family and our servants gone to roost, than a pack of jackals set up that plaintive and mournful wail by which they seem to announce to the world that they are in a starving condition. They came so close to the village that all the dogs in it set up a furious chorus of defiant barking. This woke the baby, of whose vocal powers we had been till then unaware. Fleas and mosquitoes innumerable seemed to take advantage of the disturbed state of things generally to make a combined onslaught. Vainly did I thrust my hands into my socks, tie handkerchiefs round my face and neck, and so arrange the rest of my night-attire as to leave no opening by which they could crawl in. Our necks and wrists especially seemed circled with rings of fire. Anything like the numbers and voracity of the fleas of that "happy village" I

have never, during a long and varied intimacy with the insect, experienced.

It would have been useless to go and try sleeping on a raised stage outside. In the first place, the dogs were lying in wait for the calves of our legs in its immediate vicinity; and in the second, the fleas were doubtless as numerous there as inside. If the baby was only suffering a tithe of what we were, no wonder it squalled. It was easy enough to catch them by the dozen; but it was of no manner of use—it in no way diminished the supply. So we groaned and tossed without closing an eye, eagerly watching for the morning, and an hour before daylight roused the establishment.

It was getting so dark when we reached Kefr Assad the night before, that we had not been able to appreciate the character of the country in which it was situated. Now, however, as the sun rose gloriously over the distant hills of Bashan, we looked with delight on a tract of luxuriant cultivation. Although we were on a limestone plateau, and the sedimentary rock showed in large patches on the surface, there was an abundance of rich soil bearing fine olive-groves, the thick gnarled stems of the trees affording evidence of their great antiquity. There were vine-yards and corn-fields besides; and had the population been larger, there can be no doubt we should have seen more abundant proof of the great productiveness of the country. As it was, we wondered to find the

inhabitants so poverty-stricken in the midst of so fertile a tract, till we remembered the amount of revenue which is squeezed out of them, and then the wonder was that they are able to exist at all.

We saw in the distance, upon a rising ground, surrounded by olive-gardens, the village of El Tayibeh, the spot we were making for the evening before when we lost our way. It stands near a wady of the same name, which I was able, later in the day, to look down, and which seemed to offer greater engineering facilities for reaching the plateau than either the Yarmuk or the Wady Araba.

We now decided not to follow the route by way of Tibneh, which we should have done had we slept at Tayibeh, but deliver ourselves up to our zaptiehs, who told us of a remarkable underground village called Beloola, on another road leading to Jerash. As our main object was to see the country, and especially to pass villages which had been deserted and might possibly be available for colonisation, and as we were assured that several of these lay upon our route, we started off in a south-easterly direction, following, as near as I can judge, the line of the old frontier between the tribe of Gad and the half-tribe of Manasseh. The territory of Gad extended to the Sea of Chinnereth, or Galilee, just touching its most southern point, and then striking south-east to Aroer, which faces Rabbah, or Rabboth Ammon. This Aroer of Gad has never been identified, and

must not be confounded with Aroer on the Arnon, a town of Reuben. But from the fact that it is mentioned as facing Rabbah, it must have lain south-east from the Sea of Galilee. The city of Gadara was thus included in the limits of Gad, as its name may possibly imply; and at Kefr Assad we were in a direct line between the Sea of Gennesaret and Rabbah, or a town in its neighbourhood. It is scarcely possible that the boundary of the half-tribe of Manasseh would have extended so far south as Rabboth Ammon; and the frontier town of Aroer is probably, therefore, the ruin of Arjun to the north of that city.

The real object of the zaptiehs in holding out various inducements for us to follow this line rather than the more direct route through Tibneh, lay in the fact that the latter road cuts across a series of wadies, involving a sharp descent and ascent in each case; whereas the line we followed, although longer, kept on the table-land skirting the heads of these wadies, thus securing us a relatively level road. As it was all new to us, and equally full of interest, we allowed the circumstances as they arose to decide our route for us.

We made an unusually early breakfast, which invariably consisted of coffee and Arab bread — a preparation of flour and water not unlike the Indian *chapatty*, excepting that it is as thin as a pancake and about eighteen inches in diameter. Upon this we subsisted for about five hours, when we halted to

rest and eat some more of it for luncheon, together with hard-boiled eggs, and whatever cold scraps remained from the dinner of the night before—sustaining famished nature by munching chocolate if our provender was too limited.

Our ride from Kefr Assad until our mid-day halt was somewhat monotonous. We only passed one small village—Kefr Rahta—and the country was for the most part uncultivated, consisting of high rolling verdant downs, capable of being made very productive, but left a desert through lack of population. The ruins of Samma and one or two other abandoned villages were evidences that it had not long since been more thickly inhabited. To the south, and not far distant, were the partially-wooded spurs of the Ajlun, or Gilead mountains, which we were gradually approaching. Not far from Mezar, our luncheon-place, we saw numerous sarcophagi strewn about on the hillside. One of these had been turned into a watering-trough for cattle, near a spring. Many of them were carved; but we could see no signs of the ruins of the town which should have been in their proximity, nor even of the tombs in which they had been placed. Stranger and more inexplicable monuments of a former race than these, were numerous dolmens which were in the same vicinity. They consisted of four stones, three of which formed the sides and the fourth the roof. The horizontal slabs on the top measured

ten or twelve feet by six or seven, while the side slabs were about three feet in height—the parallel ones being the same height as the one above, and the one in rear shorter, so as to correspond with its breadth. Dolmens seem to me the most mysterious, as they are the most universal, of all the monuments of antiquity. They have been found in Great Britain, Algeria, Spain, France, Holland, Denmark, Scandinavia, Germany, Palestine, and have been traced to the western confines of India. We now hear of them in Japan and in western Missouri. I never saw them in any other part of Palestine, excepting here; but Canon Tristram mentions having seen them on the plains of Moab. He does not seem to have come upon them in this part of the country, though his route cannot have been very far distant from ours. Indeed he visited Mezar on his way from Suf, and an hour before reaching the village passed the Birket Mahneh, which we left a mile or more to the left. Here he describes the buried traces of a city which must have covered a considerable area; but he seems to be not altogether certain of its identity with Mahanaim, whilst on the American map Mahneh is placed in a wady at a ruin three miles to the north of the village of Ajlun. This locality, however, does not suit the Biblical conditions nearly so well as the Birket Mahneh discovered by Canon Tristram, for many reasons. Here it was that Jacob, after

his interview with his father-in-law, Laban, in Mount Gilead, saw the angels of God coming to meet him: "and when he saw them he said, this is God's host [Mahaneh], and he called the name of the place Mahanaim" (the two hosts). It has thus preserved to this day the name Jacob gave it; and the prominent part it afterwards played in Jewish history invests it with a special interest as a spot which seems always to have retained a sacred character. It is named in the specification of the frontier towns both of Gad and of Manasseh; was one of the cities allotted to the Levites out of Gad, where it is said that the coast of Manasseh "was from Mahanaim, all Bashan," showing that it was on the extreme southern border of Bashan, which came up to the base of the mountains of Gilead. The Birket Mahneh is situated on the lower spurs of these mountains, which we entered at Mezar. It is probable, also, that it was not far from this spot that Jacob raised the pile of stones, after his interview with Laban, that he called Galeed, or "the heap of the witness," and Mizpeh, or a "beacon." He would here first strike the mountains in his flight from Mesopotamia. It was apparently on the first hill of the range that Laban overtook him, and on the top of which they made their compact and ratified it with heaps of stones; and immediately after parting from Laban he meets the angels, and calls the name of the place

Mahanaim. The appellation thus bestowed upon it by Jacob seems to have been slightly altered by a play upon the word to "Gilead," which signifies a hard rocky country. A portion of it was afterwards bestowed upon Machir, the great-grandson of Jacob, "because he was a man of war," and he called his son "Gilead," after the name of his territory.

Dr Porter, in Murray's Handbook, is of opinion that this Mizpeh may be identified with Ramath Mizpeh, the mountain now called Jebel Osh'a, which is one of the highest peaks in the mountains of southern Gilead, and rises immediately behind the modern town of Salt; and in this view he is supported by Mr Grove, in Smith's 'Dictionary of the Bible.' But even admitting that Jebel Osh'a is identical with Ramath Mizpeh mentioned in Joshua as one of the landmarks of the tribe of Gad, which is certainly open to grave doubt, it seems almost impossible that the Mizpeh of Jacob can be the same place, as it would be entirely out of his route from Mesopotamia. Jebel Osh'a is a south-west mountain of Gilead, but Jacob would have struck the range at its north-eastern extremity, not very far from which the Birket Mahneh is situated. Before reaching it, however, Laban overtakes him on a mound, which he names Galeed or Mizpeh. After leaving Mahneh he goes in a southerly direction, and crosses the Jabbok, upon the southern bank of which he meets his brother Esau. He is even then half a day's

journey to the north of Jebel Osh'a, which cannot, under these circumstances, be the Mizpeh where he raises "the heap of the witness." It is probable that the Mizpeh which was the residence of Jephthah was this same place. We are told that, when he went to fight the Ammonites, he "passed over Gilead and Manasseh, and passed over Mizpeh of Gilead, and from Mizpeh of Gilead he passed over unto the children of Ammon." The allusion to Manasseh, in this somewhat obscurely-indicated route, proves that he was traversing the northern slopes of the mountains of Ajlun or Gilead, part of which were included in Manasseh—in fact, exactly that part where Mezar is situated. He then attacks the Ammonites, and smites them "from Aroer even until thou come to Minnith, even twenty cities, and unto the plain of the vineyards [Abel Ceramim], with a great slaughter." Aroer was a city of Gad, upon its extreme eastern frontier, to the north a little probably of Rabboth Ammon. Minnith, as I shall show later, is in all probability the modern Mineh, a station on the Hadj road, about twenty miles south-east of Mezar. The notices in the 'Onomasticon,' both of Minnith and Abel, as being near Hesbon, are extremely vague, and quite unsupported by subsequent investigation. I think it has been satisfactorily shown that the ruins of the Abil near Irbid, to which I have alluded as one of the cities of the Decapolis, can be none other than Abel Ceramim (page 108). Jephthah, then, attacks

the Ammonites at Aroer, close to Rabboth Ammon, their chief city, drives them north through Minnith, following probably very much the line of the present Hadj road, then turning a little to the west, pursues them past his own home, Mizpeh, which, if it be near Mezar, as I assume, would lie about fifteen miles to the south of "the plain of the vineyards," where he overtook and defeated his enemy. The whole pursuit, from Aroer to Abel Ceramim, under these circumstances, would have extended over a distance of as nearly as possible fifty miles; it would have been through the heart of the country in which he lived; and the whole description becomes perfectly clear. If, on the other hand, we put Mizpeh on Jebel Osh'a opposite Jericho, the scene of the battle becomes transferred to the opposite end of the country of Gilead, and the difficulties surrounding Jephthah's route become immensely increased.

Again, we hear of Joshua having defeated the Hivites, who lived "under Hermon in the land of Mizpeh," together with the other Canaanitish nations at the waters of Merom, the modern Huleh, whom he smote "unto the valley or plain of Mizpeh eastward."[1] The course of their flight might in that case have been across Jaulan, which is under Hermon, to the plain of Mizpeh, or "the pillar" or "beacon," which was again the plain we were looking over, and which was south-eastward from the waters of Merom;

[1] Joshua xi. 3-8; see 1 Macc. v. 35.

whereas the Buka'a, which it has been surmised was the valley or plain of Mizpeh here signified, would have been northwards. Nor was there any pillar or beacon in the Buka'a, such as that which Jacob had rendered celebrated, and which overlooked these plains. All these considerations lead me to think that the site of Mizpeh is to be found near Mezar, on the north-eastern slopes of the Jebel Ajlun. There was a hill to the left which would answer the description of a landmark, or possibly it might have been on Jebel Kafkafa.

It would seem as if the boundary-line between the tribes of Gad and Manasseh had been determined upon with relation to the character of the country, and to the tastes and habits of the tribes; for while to Manasseh was reserved the vast arable plains and luxuriant pastures of Batanæa, Ituræa, and Golan, with only a margin of Gilead, Gad had almost a monopoly of its forests and its mountains; and that the character and tendencies of the two tribes must have differed as widely as those of highlanders and lowlanders do elsewhere. The Gadites were apparently a wild turbulent set of mountaineers, and their country, in consequence of its inaccessible and easily defensible character, often became the home of the outlaw and the refugee. Exposed to the attacks of the Assyrians and the tribes of the deserts, the Ammonites, Midianites, Hagarites, and others who were contiguous to their eastern frontier, they lived in a

state of perpetual warfare, and were doubtless much given to raiding themselves—indeed Jacob predicted of them, "a troop shall plunder him, but he shall plunder at the last." In all the records of their warfare, however, they seem to have been actuated by a certain chivalrous instinct. In the history of Jephthah, who was a Gadite, of Barzillai the Gadite's conduct to David, and of the undaunted way in which the eleven heroes of Gad rallied to that monarch's standard at the moment of his greatest need, we have marked indications of this trait in their character. That they were considered mighty men of war by the other tribes, is evident from the description given of those who joined David in 1 Chron. xii. 8: "And of the Gadites there separated themselves unto David, into the hold to the wilderness, men of might, and men of war fit for the battle, that could handle shield and buckler, whose faces were like the faces of lions, and were as swift as the roes upon the mountains;" of whom it is further said, "one at least could resist a hundred, and the greatest a thousand." Their successful raids upon the Ishmaelitish tribes of Jetur, Nephish, and Nodab on the plains near Kuneitereh, to which I have already alluded, go far to justify this exalted estimate of their prowess in war. Besides warriors the tribe produced a very remarkable character, in the person of Elijah the Tishbite, who we are informed was a Gileadite.

Our road now began to wind upwards through the

woods, which became more dense and the timber heavier as we ascended. We were, in all probability, as nearly as possible passing over the scene of the encounter between the armies of Joab and of Absalom, which must have taken place in the immediate neighbourhood of Mahanaim; for the three hosts into which David divided his army went forth out of that city to overcome Absalom, while David remained himself, at the request of the townsmen, inside the city, where his presence was considered by them as a protection in case of an attack (2 Sam. xviii. 3), "The battle," we are told, "was then scattered over the face of all the country, and the wood devoured more people that day than the sword devoured." The total loss amounted to twenty thousand men. It is possible that the 42d Psalm, that most pathetic lamentation of David, and which at the same time breathes such profound trust and confidence in God, evidently even under the pressure of some overwhelming affliction, was composed while bewailing the death of his son in the gates of Mahanaim; for in the sixth verse the identical name occurs which is retained to this day by the village at which we halted, and which seems to furnish additional evidence of the proximity of Mahanaim. "O my God, my soul is cast down within me: therefore will I remember Thee from the land of Jordan, and of the Hermonites, from the hill Mizar." The whole passage is clearly an allusion to some great sorrow which

overtook him beyond Jordan, and which, together with the lesson it was intended to convey, would remain indelibly stamped upon his memory.

The forest in which this important engagement took place was called the "wood of Ephraim," but it is evident that, though called by the name of another tribe, it was in the land of Gilead, and must have been in close proximity to Mahanaim, or the inhabitants would not have been in fear of attack, nor could Joab's messengers have carried the news of Absalom's death so speedily to David, whom they found sitting between the gates of the city. It will be remembered that one of them, Ahimaz, "ran by the way of the plain, and overran Cushi," thus showing that Mahanaim must have been on the outskirts of the forest, which would exactly agree with the position of Birket Mahneh; while "the wood of Ephraim" must have been the northern section of the wooded country of Gilead, bordering on the plain. It is probable that the anomaly of the name may be accounted for in this way. On a reference to the account of the distribution of the tribes (Joshua xvii. 14-18), it will be found that the tribe of Ephraim as well as Manasseh was discontented with their portion, and complained to Joshua of the limited amount of territory on Mount Ephraim which had been assigned to them. "And Joshua answered them, If thou be a great people, then get thee up to the wood country, and cut down for

thyself there in the land of the Perizzites and of the giants [or Rephaims], if Mount Ephraim be too narrow for thee." This wood country in the land of the Perizzites and the giants could be none other than Gilead. They answered that, in order to do so, they would have to cross the valley of Beth-shean, where the Canaanites used chariots of iron (Beth-shean is about twenty miles due west of Mahanaim); but Joshua replied to them, "Thou art a great people, and hast great power; thou shalt not have one lot only: but the mountain shall be thine; for it is a wood, and thou shalt cut it down; and the outgoings of it shall be thine: for thou shalt drive out the Canaanites, though they have iron chariots, and though they be strong." It is evident from this that the two tribes—the sons of Joseph—were to some extent treated as one by Joshua, and were told to take possession of some part of the mountain of Gilead. Again, we find that the children of Ephraim had separate cities among the inheritance of the children of Manasseh, and that the inheritance of Machir, the eldest son of Manasseh, was "Gilead and Bashan." It is therefore extremely natural to suppose that a settlement of Ephraimites, after whom a wood was called, was situated on the extreme southern frontier of Manasseh, projecting as it were into the forests of Gad, and thus specially known as the wood of Ephraim. That only a very small portion of it ever really fell to the lot of Manasseh and

Ephraim, is evident from the boundary towns by which the limit of Gad is indicated, and which leaves that tribe nearly the whole mountain.

We now seemed to have entered an entirely new country. The traveller who only knows Palestine to the west of the Jordan, can form no idea of the luxuriance of the hillsides of Gilead, doubly enjoyable by the contrast which they present to the rocky barren slopes of Galilee and Judea, or even to the plains of the Hauran and Jaulan. Here we crossed sparkling rivulets where the sunlight glinted through the foliage of handsome oak, terebinth, and carob trees, and traversed glades seldom disturbed by the foot of man, which led into the deep solitudes of the forest. In one of these Absalom met his end; and one could well understand, as one came suddenly upon the brink of some rock or gorge, why, possibly in headlong and disastrous flight, so many of the combatants on that fatal day should have been numbered among the missing, that it was said "the wood devoured more than the sword." In places the forest opened, and the scenery resembled that of an English park, the large trees standing singly in the long grass; while at others, where possibly in old days there had been well-cultivated farms, the trees gave way altogether to luxuriant herbage, encircling it as though it were a lake of grass into which their long branches drooped. At a spot where two paths diverged our zaptiehs suddenly halted: one they

said led to Ajlun, the other striking off in exactly the opposite direction to Beloola; but Beloola, which like an *ignis fatuus* constantly receded as we approached, now seemed altogether to have changed its situation. Had we known at the start that it lay so far to the east—if it does lie there at all—we should not have been seduced into searching for it. In Dr Smith's excellent map a place of that name is marked, but it was in quite another position from that assigned to it by our zaptiehs, who seemed now to doubt very much whether we should reach it at all, and could give us no assurances as to accommodation. On the other hand, the way to Ajlun was plain before us. The path was a well-beaten one, the distance moderate, the night-quarters certain to be tolerable —for it is a village of sufficient importance to give its name to the province, and it had the additional attraction of lying in the heart of the mountains and forests, while to reach Beloola it seemed we should have to skirt away towards the deserts. Possibly the whole of the representations of the zaptiehs were pure fabrications, and they had invented them in order to take us to Ajlun for their own purposes; but there was a great deal to be said in favour of the latter village, principally that the road there took us exactly through the country we desired most to see. As it is, excepting the Tunisian officer whom we met at Irbid, and who told us of its existence and of

its vast subterranean dwellings, and of the ruins by which they were surrounded, I have not met any one who knew anything about Beloola, nor can I find any mention of it in any work on this region which I have had an opportunity of consulting. My impression is, that this subterranean town will be found somewhere in the Jebel Kafkafa.

When we had attained an elevation of about 3500 feet above the sea, we came upon a comparatively level plateau and some patches of cultivation, though we passed no signs of habitations, and from a shoulder on the ridge obtained a magnificent view over the vast wooded tract which stretched to the west and north-west, broken into valleys, containing streams flowing into the Jordan. In the opposite direction our view was over an undulating forest country, almost on our own level. We were, in fact, crossing the highest part of the chain; and soon after, turning south-west, commenced a descent down a romantic gorge, where the oaks and terebinths overshadowed the gigantic rocks amid which they grew. Suddenly we turned a corner, and a prospect as unexpected as it was beautiful burst upon us. The glen widened into a lovely valley, where fields and olive-groves mingled with the forest, and wreaths of blue smoke indicated the presence of a larger population than we had yet seen. A lofty conical hill rising above those which

surrounded it, and crowned with a large square castle, which in the distance bore no appearance of being a ruin, formed a most striking background to the picture. It was such a view as one would expect to find rather in the Black Forest than within twenty miles of the great Arabian desert, and filled us with delightful anticipations.

CHAPTER VI.

AJLUN—THE CHRISTIAN QUARTER—RUINS—THREATENED ATTACK—KULAT ER RUBUD—WADY YABIS, SHEIKH OF SÛF—SETTLEMENT OF DISPUTES—ROAD TO SÛF—A SHEIKH'S TESTIMONIALS—JERASH—TEKITTY—SUCCOTH AND PENUEL—THE BELKA.

THE stream which we are now following rises at the fountain of Jenneh; and at the point where it forces its way through a narrow passage to fall into the broad Wady Ajlun, the village of that name is situated, perched most picturesquely on the hillside some hundreds of feet above the valley, and surrounded by olive-groves and gardens. It was the largest centre of population and best-built village we had seen to the east of the Jordan, though that is giving it scant praise, for the population did not probably exceed five hundred; and the superiority of the houses consisted in some of them having a sort of upper chamber on their flat roofs, and in the mud with which they were plastered being a little better put on than usual.

Three-fourths of this population are Christian, and the remainder Moslem. Although I generally prefer

lodging with a Mohammedan to being cheated by a Christian in the more civilised parts of Turkey, in these remote regions, where the cupidities of the latter have not been stimulated by their contact with Western civilisation, one finds them almost as hospitable as Mussulmans; and as in the village of Ajlun the houses they occupied seemed larger than those of the followers of Mahomet, we decided on seeking for Christian quarters. The zaptiehs, however, had views of their own on the subject, and wished to take us to one of their own friends and of their own religion: and so, although we had distinctly explained our wishes, we found ourselves in the midst of the Moslem quarter before discovering our mistake. Our moving away from it at the moment we were about to be hospitably received, seemed rather a marked slight, and apparently gave rise to the suspicion that we had some reason for manifesting so decided a preference for the Christians. We felt this at the time, but there was such a tempting-looking house on the other side of the village, that we allowed our desire for our own comfort to overcome considerations of policy and politeness, and much to the disgust of the zaptiehs, whom we rated roundly for disobedience of orders, rode off to investigate its capabilities. On our way we met a Greek priest, with light sandy unkempt locks hanging beneath his high square hat, a ragged garment, and bare feet, —a very poverty-stricken-looking specimen of his

profession; but perhaps this was to his credit, as he was the spiritual superior of the village, and might have used his position to enrich himself, as is common with his class all through Syria. Perhaps there was nothing to be got out of his flock, who were as poor as himself; perhaps there had been no great demand lately for bigamous marriages. However that may be, he was overwhelmingly polite, and not above a gratuity in consequence, and piloted us to the coveted mansion, where the big upper room had attracted us from afar.

When one arrives at a village with zaptiehs, hospitality is perhaps not so much a merit as a necessity. The traveller thus accompanied never thinks of asking permission—he takes possession. As we never intended that our hosts should be losers, we had the less scruple in thus summarily installing ourselves wherever we took a fancy, even though, as in the present case, the house was tenanted by a lone widow with children. We had not been deceived by appearances—decidedly there was no such room in the village as the one we now appropriated. It was on the roof of another chamber, situated, as usual, in a courtyard surrounded by a mud wall, and containing oven, stables, cattle-pen, &c.; and from it, had we so desired, we could have walked over the roofs of many adjoining houses, piled one above the other on the hillside, their courtyards usually the scene of a good deal of feminine activity. Indeed, no sooner

were we installed than all the widow's lady friends came to look at us; old women and young maidens flocked to offer their services, and, under pretence of making themselves useful, to gratify their curiosity. Nor had we any reason to object. Not only did they help to sweep out the room, bring mats and coverlets, fetch wood and water, stopping every now and then to gaze earnestly, like deer only half tamed, but they were objects of interest in themselves. In no part of Syria or Palestine have I seen such beautiful girls as among the Christian maidens of Ajlun. Their faces were of the purest Grecian type; their eyes large and lustrous; nose, mouth, and chin classical in their outline; their complexion a light olive; and the symmetry of their figures, so far as one could judge, corresponded with the beauty of their faces. Their habit of carrying water-jars rendered their carriage easy and graceful. On the chin, just below the under lip, they were usually tattooed with a blue mark like a small gridiron, which no doubt lends an additional charm when your taste has been properly educated to it, and is quite as attractive as the small round piece of sticking-plaster called a beauty-spot, which they may hope to arrive at when they get to "tied backs," instead of the loose blue Arab gowns which now form their only garment. As our bustling entertainers possessed all our sympathies, and our zaptiehs, as usual, were gratuitously rough and overbearing, we packed them off to find quarters

for themselves among their Moslem friends. The priest, who was a mild inoffensive personage, apparently devoid of intelligence, came and squatted on his heels in our room, where we regaled him with coffee, and endeavoured without success to extract information from him. Partly from suspicion and a fear of compromising themselves, and partly from the difficulty of grasping any ideas with which they are not familiar, the ordinary villager in these parts is a person from whom it is very difficult to obtain intelligent answers to the most simple questions. From what we could gather, however, the Christian and Moslem population of Ajlun were not on such good terms as we had found them elsewhere, and a somewhat quarrelsome spirit generally seemed to pervade the villages in the neighbourhood.

We had still time, while Hanna was cooking our dinner, to go out for a walk of exploration. Below our house, and close to the stream, was situated a handsome edifice, once a Christian church, which was converted into a mosque by some sultan, who has recorded the fact in an elaborate inscription in Turkish, which we could not read. The building was a hundred yards long by fifty broad, the roof supported by arches; and a lofty square tower, like a campanile, had once formed the belfry, and was now the haunt of the *muezzin*. Within a few yards of this mosque was a massive building of great antiquity, which we entered, and found that it had been erected over a

copious spring, which filled a chamber twenty feet by ten, with bubbling water clear as crystal, and about a foot in depth. This gushed out into a venerable covered aqueduct, and was the chief water-supply of the village. All round us were traces of age, and of a departed greatness. Though I failed to perceive any prostrate columns or remains of Roman ruins, there is every probability that they exist, and that in former times Ajlun was a city of importance, though, so far as I know, it has not yet been identified as the site of any place known either in Roman or Jewish history. Perched on a projecting crag, about a hundred feet above the spring, were the ruins of an old castle, which, until a comparatively late period, had been used as the residence of the governor of the province, when Ajlun formed its capital. It has been allowed since then to fall completely into disrepair, and probably dates from the time of the Crusaders, and is of Saracenic origin. There can be no doubt that the antiquarian who should establish himself at Ajlun would find abundant return for the trouble of examination; while no more beautiful or healthy spot could be found, as a centre from which to explore the surrounding country, teeming as it does with associations of the deepest interest, and strewn with ruined cities, the identification of which has yet to be determined.

We were reluctantly compelled by the growing darkness to curtail our own investigations, though we

were not sorry to sit down to a well-earned repast, and were just spreading our blankets, preparatory to an attempt to sleep upon them, when our hostess came in, and informed us with some appearance of trepidation, that our conduct in first going to the Moslem quarter, and then, when we found out our mistake, leaving it to install ourselves among Christians, had given great offence, as proving that we were not true friends of the Sultan, and that she had been warned by friends that a plot had been formed to attack and rob us in the night. She therefore dragged out of the corner of the room a huge stone, which she directed us to roll against the door, as it was destitute of any fastening, and keep watch all night. We had scarcely complied with this request when we heard a knocking, and found on inquiry that it was not a robber but one of our own zaptiehs who wished to effect an entrance. The object of his visit was to corroborate the statement of our hostess. He also had heard among his co-religionists of their intention to attack us, and came to give us warning. This was by no means reassuring, for we quite thought our zaptiehs capable of being at the bottom of the whole scheme; nor would it necessarily be rendered abortive by the fact that we were forewarned, as two travellers with one revolver between them could scarcely be considered a match for half a village. It is due to the Moslem population to say that, had we thrown ourselves in the first instance

upon their hospitality, we should not have incurred the slightest risk; but they believed they had been insulted, and were probably encouraged in this belief by our zaptiehs, who were in a very bad humour, and quite in the spirit of revenge. Upon several occasions we had been obliged to reprove them sharply, and especially to express our regret to the one who had been in Beatson's Horse, that he had not been improved by the discipline and punishments to which he had been subjected while in that distinguished corps. However, we thanked him for his warning, rolled back the stone when he had gone, examined our solitary revolver, and then our blankets. We considered the latter likely to prove of the greatest service to us. They were so crowded with fleas that, were I not afraid of being accused of exaggeration, I should say the insects must have had some difficulty in moving about. It was quite evident that we should have no trouble in keeping awake and watching. The idea of being caught "napping" was manifestly out of the question. In fact, so little hope had we of going to sleep, that we determined, in spite of the projected attack, to do our utmost to accomplish that object, but all our efforts were in vain. I think we should have been relieved if something had occurred to vary the occupation of monotonous scratching. As it was — and we discovered afterwards why our would-be assailants' hearts failed them at the last moment—we were the victims of no other

attack than that made by these persistent and voracious little insects upon our cuticle. I think a great many Kefr Assad fleas were here joined by those of Ajlun, and the whole were carefully rolled up in our blankets next morning, for our benefit on the following night. It is true that at early dawn I enlisted the willing services of some lovely village maidens to pick them out; but the hosts were too numerous for them to make any impression upon, and they gave up the task in despair.

We determined before leaving Ajlun to visit the Kulat er Rubud, or Castle of Rubud, which forms so conspicuous a feature in the landscape, the lofty hill on which it was situated rising almost immediately from behind the village. After a steep ride of about half an hour up a winding path, we reached the summit, and found ourselves at an elevation of 3700 feet above the level of the sea, and about 4500 above the valley of the Jordan, which lay mapped out at our feet throughout nearly its entire length. With the aid of a map we could designate by name the principal mountains of Palestine beyond it, while to the north the wooded country was intersected by wadies, and in the distance the snowy summit of Hermon was dimly visible. To the south, and winding round the base of the mountain on which we stood, was the lovely Wady Ajlun, adding its contribution to the Jordan, and fertilising a rich tract of well-cultivated country, of which the important village of Kefrenjy



KULAT ER RUBUD, AJLUN.

is the centre. Behind it rose the mountains of Gilead, closing in the prospect on the south and east.

Crossing a broad moat, now dry, but which had been hewn out of the living rock, by a drawbridge, we entered the castle by an archway in which had been a portcullis, and followed a winding passage and stairway — the latter had become an inclined plane, owing to the *débris* with which it was blocked —for nearly a hundred paces. Several chambers opened out of this corridor to the right and left. We emerged into daylight in the centre of the castle, and here we found the great central tower and keep. Ascending this, partly by the remains of stone steps, and partly by the help of the crumbling walls, we surveyed, from its commanding height, the interior economy of the castle,—the external walls of which are still standing intact, with massive flanking towers built on projections of the rock. While the moat itself enclosed a square measuring a hundred yards each way, the castle had been built irregularly, so as to take advantage of the natural conformation of the rock : besides the central tower there was a square tower at each corner, and a lofty massive projection on the southern side. Standing on the apex of a conical hill, it must have been impregnable in ancient times. Besides what appeared to be a choked well, there was a cistern hewn out of a platform of rock inside the castle, and another much larger one outside

the moat. The arches of the doors and windows were pointed. The walls were machicolated above the entrance and round the towers, and on some of the massive stones of which they were constructed were carved designs. Altogether the castle is in a tolerable state of preservation, considering that it is said to have been erected by Saladin the Great; indeed Seetzen, who first visited it in 1806, found it inhabited at that date by the Arab sheikh who was the chief of these parts.

As we had a day's journey still before us, we could not linger so long as I could have wished at a spot so seldom visited; and I would gladly have been able to spend the rest of the day exploring the Wady Yabis, which is immediately contiguous to the castle on the north side, where the site of Jabesh Gilead remains yet to be satisfactorily identified. Robinson places it at a ruin called Ed-Deir; but I think Mr Merill has shown that the ruin of Miryamin, which he discovered four years ago, has superior claims to be considered the site of that interesting but unlucky city. Some idea of its population in the early days of the Jewish occupation of the country may be gathered from the fact that, when it became necessary to provide wives for the tribe of Benjamin, and twelve thousand of the "valiantest men of Israel went up against Jabesh Gilead," after slaughtering all the males, all the women who were or had been married, and all the children, four

hundred marriageable virgins remained, who were carried off. This punishment was inflicted upon the inhabitants because they refused to answer the summons of the other tribes to make war on Benjamin in the first instance (Judges xxi. 8). Three hundred years afterwards the valley over which we were now looking became the scene of another terrific slaughter, for the Ammonites under Nahash came and encamped in it, and threatened to spare the town only on the condition that the entire male population would consent to having their right eyes thrust out. On obtaining seven days' grace, and appealing for help to Saul, an army of three hundred and thirty thousand men was collected in three days. After a night-march, the Israelites "came into the midst of the host in the morning watch, and slew the Ammonites until the heat of the day;" and "they which remained were scattered, so that two of them were not left together." If the country was as thickly wooded then as it is now, it was eminently adapted for a night-surprise; and the difficulty of escape back to Ammon, over the rocky passes of Gilead, would easily account for the slaughter and dispersion of the army of Nahash, which was no doubt much outnumbered by this immense and rapidly extemporised host (1 Sam. xi.)

On our return to the village we found to our surprise the energetic and indefatigable Caimakam of Ajlun, whom we had parted from at Irbid, camped

under the trees. He had suddenly arrived with a company of mounted infantry, to put a stop to some village disputes, which threatened to culminate in acts of violence, and to restore order in a district which had been too long neglected by previous provincial authorities, and which was, consequently, unaccustomed to control. It was doubtless owing to the timely receipt of the news of the Caimakam's approach late the night before, that we owed our immunity from the attack and robbery with which we had been threatened. It would seem that the population of Ajlun and the adjoining villages were in a turbulent mood, and just in the humour for robbing strangers, for they were expecting an attack from the inhabitants of Sûf, a large and populous village, where we intended to lunch. The Caimakam assured me that the sheikh at Sûf could bring fourteen hundred fighting men into the field; but I think in this estimate the male inhabitants of other villages, together with a large number of nomad Arabs with whom he is allied, must have been included, as there is no one village in the province which could furnish more than a tenth of that number out of its own population. There is so little difference between the inhabitants of these villages, who are really sedentary Arabs, and the Bedouins, that in their disputes they sometimes get the latter to help them. The sheikh of Sûf, who had threatened to make a descent upon Ajlun with this formidable force, was a rebellious in-

dividual, by name Hassan Effendi Barakat, the most powerful chief in this region of country; and he was now doubly notorious for the revolt he had incited the previous year against the Turkish Government, when he refused to pay the taxes, and resisted the authority of the Government, then distracted by European complications, with some success. Since then the movement had been repressed, but Hassan Effendi had not been punished, nor had the taxes been collected. English travellers who have visited Jerash may remember a handsome but extortionate and insolent Arab sheikh at Sûf, who demanded, and always with success, an extortionate sum as black-mail, for which he gave them an escort and protection during their visit to the ruins. This was none other than Hassan Effendi Barakat, who was sitting on his heels, with his head bent down, in an attitude of profound humility, in the presence of the Caimakam when we rode up and dismounted. After the first cordial greetings had been exchanged, we took our seats on the carpet by the side of the Caimakam, while he explained the situation. We found a most interesting but guilty-looking group of leading men arrayed before us, to each one of whom a history of lawlessness of some sort was attached; while the soldiers, with their horses tethered to the trees, were grouped round, and some zaptiehs, of most brigand aspect, made up in picturesqueness for what they lacked in virtue. Then the Caimakam,—pointing out

Hassan Effendi, who seemed quite conscious that his misconduct was being descanted upon, and tried to look penitent, — after telling me his history, announced that he was dismissed from the Medjliss or provincial council; that he was disgraced from his position as head sheikh, and must live henceforth in retirement and under surveillance; and that fifteen years of arrears of taxes, the payment of which he had refused during all that time, were to be made good by him,—for which acts of clemency Hassan endeavoured to look deeply grateful, and came and made low reverences to the Caimakam, and obsequiously kissed my hand. There was, however, a look in his eye which suggested that it was an extremely hollow salutation, and that he would be glad of any favourable opportunity which might arise, when he could take his revenge for having performed it. When he returned to his place, the Caimakam pointed to his next neighbour, a remarkably intelligent-looking fine-featured man, with a flowing yellow *kufeiyeh*, and dress carefully and picturesquely arranged, who was chief of the Christian community of the neighbouring village of Kefrenjy, and who had been summoned to arrange a blood-feud which existed between them and the Christians of Ajlun, in consequence of the murder, in a quarrel, of one of the latter. The guilty parties, four in number, had been given up, and handed over to the Caimakam, and guarantees had been required and obtained that

peace should be observed for the future. This chief also advanced and made his reverence to us, but was far more manly in his bearing and sympathetic in his manner than the sheikh of Sûf. There were some other neighbouring notables to whom the Caimakam deemed it necessary to address some words of warning and good advice; and I took advantage of the opportunity to complain to him of the overbearing manner of our own zaptiehs towards the country people, and they received in consequence an admonition which was not without its good results. Then we drank coffee and smoked narghilehs, and discussed the political condition of the country, and the administrative problems which had to be dealt with. The Caimakam attributed the disorder which had reigned so long to the east of the Jordan entirely to the lack of efficiency and energy on the part of those upon whom the task had devolved of governing it, and to some extent to the absence of the necessary armed force. Since the arrival of Midhat Pasha five hundred mounted infantry had been amply sufficient to establish peace and order, alike among the sedentary and nomad population; and he saw no reason why, with the aid of this small military contingent, whom he much preferred to zaptiehs, the most perfect security should not reign from the slopes of Hermon to the shores of the Dead Sea. With a properly paid local police, aided and supported by a small body of regular troops, order could be maintained;

and, with a reform in the system of tax-collecting, the contentment and happiness of the peasantry insured. We certainly were able to judge for ourselves of the effect of an energetic administration upon the country. We had seen the district near Gadara, usually so insecure, prepared as it were for our reception by the arm of the law, as represented by the Caimakam himself with a few soldiers, swiftly overtaking those who had violated it. We had witnessed at Ajlun the immediate effect produced by the personal presence of the same functionary, and the complete submission of a district notoriously turbulent; while the security with which we travelled to the end of our journey, through regions supposed to be inaccessible, excepting by the payment of black-mail and accompanied by an escort, furnished constant evidence of the salutary effect of an administration which showed a determination to enforce and sustain its authority. The principle of the Caimakam of Ajlun was, not to be satisfied with sending underlings to settle disputes or enforce the law, but instantly to proceed himself to the scene of action; and the rapidity and unexpectedness of his movements never failed to produce the desired effect. The Arab problem to the east of the Jordan would not be difficult of solution if a few active and intelligent functionaries like Daoud Abbadie Effendi, Caimakam of Ajlun, were employed to solve it.

We were now obliged to turn our backs upon

Ajlun and its romantic surroundings—of all the spots I have visited in the Holy Land, to me the most attractive. Its gushing waters, its hanging forests, its rocky gorges, its productive gardens, its fair maidens, its grand old castle, its delightful climate, all combine to invest this valley in the heart of Gilead with an unrivalled charm; and I cannot but hope that the day is not far distant when the vast tracts of rich land, now lying waste upon its slopes, may be cultivated by an emigrant population, who will develop their resources, and find in these beautiful and secluded vales a refuge from that persecution to which they are exposed in Christian countries.

Our way to Sûf lay up a glen which meets the gorge by which we had descended into Ajlun at that village. It was, if possible, the more beautiful of the two. The combination of overhanging rock and pendulous wood was perfect,—wild olive, arbutus, laurustinus, and many other shrubs formed the underwood, above which sycamore, oak, and terebinth spread their branches; while in places crags and pinnacles of rock projected over the path which wound round their base. Passing a small Christian village, the name of which I have unfortunately mislaid, we steadily ascended to the summit of the ridge, and then descended 700 or 800 feet to the straggling dirty village of Sûf. We here struck the route taken by the few travellers who visit the ruins of Jerash from Jerusalem and Salt. Although there are on an

average not more than one or two a-year, the effect of their passage through the village is at once visible. The children ask for *baksheesh*, the men scowl and look insolent, and the women do not stare open-mouthed, as at unknown monsters. We meant to choose our own spot for lunch just outside the village, but the pressure to enter the house of the sheikh was so strong that we finally yielded to it. It was at present occupied by the sheikh's brother, the sheikh himself, it will be remembered, having already made our acquaintance in the morning, under the circumstances I have just described.

The contrast between the insolent confident manner of the brother, who did not exactly know what was passing at Ajlun, with the servility we had seen manifested there, was most amusing; and he was evidently little prepared for the tone of independence we adopted. On entering his house several other Arabs crowded in, while the sheikh opened a greasy old pocket-book, and extracted therefrom about a score of documents in English and French, which he seemed to regard in the light of favourable testimonials.

The price of an escort from Jerusalem to Jerash in time of peace is about 250 francs, but the traveller who has paid this sum is invariably black-mailed at Sûf, and has to disgorge another hundred francs or more before he is allowed to proceed, while a far higher sum is demanded if he wishes to push his

explorations over the country to the north, which we had already traversed in safety. The testimonials which the sheikh triumphantly produced consisted largely of complaints against this robbery. When, with an apparent feeling of gratified vanity, he handed us a testimonial calling him an "extortionate old thief," and warning travellers to beware of him; and insisted upon our reading it carefully and then returning to him, to be stowed away for future use, and then expected us to comply with his demand for money, he seemed quite astonished at our attitude of resistance.

"Why should we pay you five pounds?" we asked.

"It is the custom," he replied; "no traveller has been allowed to visit the ruins without paying me."

"Then it is a bad custom, which must be immediately discontinued," we said. "We decline absolutely to pay a farthing."

"But no one has ever before declined."

"Then it is high time for some one to set the example," we remarked, and we called in the zaptiehs, who for the first time proved of some use. They, anxious to prove their zeal and importance, and knowing that they ran no risk, as the Caimakam and his soldiers were within call, poured upon the head of the sheikh a torrent of invective—telling him that they were a far better protection than any escort he could furnish, and that there was

plenty more protection at Ajlun, about which, if he had any doubt, he had better send and ask his brother, who was in a position to give him all the necessary information—with many other sarcastic remarks of a like nature, which made all the surrounding Arabs, who had begun to look truculent, change countenance considerably. Nevertheless he went on murmuring and protesting, and offering us more testimonials, which we read out of curiosity, until we had finished our meal and our cigarettes, when we quietly mounted and rode away, leaving the sheikh, and the savage-looking group of Arabs by whom he was surrounded, staring open-mouthed at our audacity, but utterly impotent and paralysed by the new turn matters had taken, thanks to an energetic Caimakam.

The old Roman road which connected Pella with Gerasa or Jerash, seems to have followed the track by which we came from Ajlun to Sûf, for there are some traces of it near the latter village, where there was probably a station; here are also some remains of broken columns, on one of which is a Greek inscription. Three springs near Sûf give rise to a stream which turns a mill or two, and flows down a charming glen, the Wady-ed-Deir, in which are olive-groves of extreme antiquity. We followed its windings down a gentle slope for more than an hour, and then suddenly turned into the broad, shallow, and somewhat desolate valley in which lie the im-

posing and extensive ruins of the ancient city of Jerash. The forest had ceased on our leaving Sûf, and except the oleanders which fringed the stream, no shrubs or trees relieved the barren aspect of the scene. Nevertheless the whole of this country is well watered, and susceptible of the highest cultivation, if a population equal in amount to that which once inhabited it so densely were only restored to it.

We sat on one of the prostrate columns which surrounded the atrium or large court by which the great temple was enclosed, and gazed on the monuments, unsurpassed in their solitary grandeur, which testify to the magnificence of a former civilisation. From the eminence upon which the great temple stands we looked down upon the long colonnade that intersected the city, a hundred columns of which are upright and intact—while of others the lower parts are still erect, amid the *débris* of those that are shattered and prostrate; upon the four huge pedestals which —once vaulted over—formed the tetrapylon, where there was a cross street also lined with columns; upon the three-arched bridge which spans the stream; upon the great portal of the grand propyleum, with the remains of the basilica behind; upon the ruins of the baths beyond, and far to the right, at the other end of the Via Columnata, upon the forum, encircled by an Ionic colonnade, of which fifty-seven columns are still standing; upon the grand

theatre, with its twenty-eight tiers of seats, and another temple beyond, close to the southern gate of the city. Behind us the grand temple, dedicated to the sun, reared its imposing pile. Out of the thirteen columns which adorned it, eleven remain erect, the largest measuring about forty feet in height and six in thickness. The temple itself, three sides of which are perfect, was twenty-six yards long and twenty-two wide; and we walked down the central street to the forum and grand theatre, and from the highest tiers of the latter could overlook the ruins from their southern extremity; while from the hill behind we could see the Naumachia, the scene of those sham naval fights in which the Romans delighted, and the triumphal arch beyond. The high ground by which the city is surrounded furnishes numerous admirable points of view, and the ruins are comparatively so perfect that it needs no great stretch of imagination to reconstruct the streets and buildings, and people them with the busy thousands who once made Jerash the centre of Eastern opulence and civilisation.

Jerash was probably never more magnificent than during the lifetime of our Lord, and the two or three centuries immediately succeeding that period. Then it was that the Decapolis attained the summit of its fame and prosperity; and the ruins of such cities as Jerash, Gadara, Pella, and Philadelphia or Rabbath - Ammon, all within or bordering on the

ancient limits of the tribe of Gad, are the best evidence we could desire of the vast resources of the territory which was allotted to it, and of the possibilities which may be in store for it in the future.

We had sent our mules direct from Sûf to Tekitty, our night quarters, and now made for that village by a path considerably to the south of that by which we had approached Jerash. We soon reached the woods, and ascended steadily for more than an hour, our route from time to time affording magnificent views over the rolling country to the south-east, with lofty wooded mountains in the background. A little before sunset we reached the top of the pass, and passing the ruined village of Reimun came upon an ancient ruin, probably of Roman origin, beneath which were extensive excavations in the limestone rock. We now began to descend into a basin formed by an amphitheatre in the mountains, and passed through fine groves of gnarled old olive-trees to the village of Tekitty, which lay embosomed in the midst of them. Here we were hospitably received by the Moslem sheikh, who placed the upper room of his house at our disposal, an apartment not inferior to that which we had occupied at Ajlun, though it was the only one of the kind of which the village could boast.

The more we wandered among these hills, the more struck we were with the charm of their scenery, the health-giving qualities of their sharp bracing air,

and their great natural capabilities for agricultural purposes. Here was a region eminently adapted for colonisation by a people accustomed to a European climate, and requiring but little manual labour to be made sufficiently productive to sustain them. Immediately behind Tekitty, Jebel Hakart, clothed to the summit with fine forests and broad stretches of the greenest pasture-land, reared its crest to a height of about 3790 feet above the sea, the highest peak of the range which encircled this richly cultivated valley. In the blue haze of evening we traced the lofty irregular outline of the mountains of Eastern Gilead, some of which seemed to attain an even greater altitude than those by which we were surrounded, all heavily timbered, but, so far as I know, as yet totally unexplored, and but very vaguely indicated in the best maps. Except by a few wandering Arabs they are uninhabited, and consequently totally uncultivated, waiting, let us hope, to be reoccupied by the descendants of the same race which once pastured their flocks in their luxuriant valleys, and upon the rolling prairie-land which stretched beneath us. After the return from the Captivity a number of Jews again settled in Gilead in the midst of a heathen population. Here were forests celebrated throughout Palestine for products of a special nature, as we may gather from the account of the Ishmaelites who "came from Gilead with their camels bearing spicery and balm and myrrh, going to carry it down

to Egypt" (Gen. xxxvii. 25); and from the exclamation of the prophet, "Is there no balm in Gilead?" This was supposed to be a liquid resin, extracted by incision from the *Amyris Gileadensis*, and owing to its scarceness and extraordinary qualities formed a valuable present even to princes. Some idea of the value of this extract may be formed from the following facts narrated by Pliny. When Alexander was in Judæa, a spoonful was all that could be collected in a summer day; and in a plentiful year, the great royal park of these trees yielded only six gallons, and the smaller one only one gallon. It was consequently so dear that it sold for double its weight in silver. Vespasian and Titus carried each one of the plants which produced it to Rome; and Pompey boasted of bearing them in his triumph. The question then put by the prophet is one which may prove most interesting in the present day to botanists — "Is there no balm in Gilead?" Whether there be or not, there can be little doubt that an intelligent examination of these little-known forests might suggest a profitable cultivation of those aromatic, gum, and spice-bearing shrubs for which they were once so famous.

There was only one Christian family in the little village of Tekitty, which, considering the luxuriance of its groves and gardens, should have presented a more prosperous and thriving appearance than it did. The peasants, however, lose all heart; for the

result of their industry is only that they become more squeezable for taxes than if they remained poor, and they content themselves, therefore, with producing just what is absolutely needful; while the more squalid and miserable is the aspect which they present, the more immunity do they secure from the tax-collector.

Our road on the following morning skirted the hill-side of Jebel Hakart, and for the first time pine-trees were thickly intermingled with the oaks, carobs, and terebinths, while there was a dense undergrowth of arbutus, laurustinus, and other shrubs. During the whole way to the village of Birmah the prospect eastwards was magnificent, and filled one with longing to penetrate the unknown region which was so temptingly spread out before us. Even here we met the ubiquitous Jedeideh men driving their donkeys laden with *semen*, often from distant Arab encampments; for they follow the nomads to their most remote haunts, and are familiar, in consequence, with every inch of the country. They always greeted us with a cordial salutation of "Marhabâ," and were glad to stop and gossip with travellers, one of whom knew their native village.

Birmah, like Tekitty, was surrounded by olive-gardens, and the entire male population was basking in the sun, as we passed, upon the large village dung-hill. From this point we began to descend to the fords of the Jabbok by a glen clothed with wild olive,

and after a long downward scramble reached the bed of that brawling stream, rushing in a turbid torrent between banks thickly fringed with cane and oleander. Here we lunched, and refreshed ourselves with a delightful bath preparatory to a long and arduous climb up the opposite slope of the valley. We wondered whether we were anywhere near the spot—impossible to identify—where Jacob wrestled with the angel prior to his interview with his brother Esau, and which took place at a ford of the Jabbok, which he named Penuel. As he was on his way from Mahanaim to Shechem, the modern Nablous, he had already trended somewhat further to the south than he need have done; but this was doubtless for the purpose of meeting his brother, whom he desired to conciliate before taking up his abode in his neighbourhood. As the spot usually identified as Succoth, the next stage on his journey, lies on the west bank of the Jordan, considerably to the north of the direct road from the Jabbok to Shechem, he would most probably have had to recross this stream with his flocks and herds, and then turn southwards again to Shechem. Burckhardt mentions a ruin on the east side of the Jordan, also called Sukhât; but this is open to the same objection, though it has the argument in its favour that it is situated within the territory of Gad, which we know Succoth to have been. It is just possible that it was necessary for Jacob to go so far out of his way to find a ford across

the Jordan; before the matter can be decided, the Sukhât mentioned by Burckhardt should be visited, as the site adopted by Robinson and Vandevelde seems open to the fatal objection that it is not within the limits of Gad (Josh. xiii. 27), unless we suppose the boundary of that tribe to have extended beyond the Jordan.

It is evident that Succoth and Penuel were on the main route from Central Palestine to Eastern Gilead, for by it Gideon pursued the Midianitish kings, Zebah and Zalmunnah, following them up probably into the mountains on our left: he then returned and took vengeance on the inhabitants of the two towns for refusing supplies to his army, razing the tower of Penuel, and slaying all the men in the place. It is probable that it was situated at the most frequented of the Jabbok fords, where its banks become more easy of access. There were some vestiges of ruin where we crossed, and from the height above we could trace the course of the stream from the base of the mountains to the Jordan, so that there can be little doubt the site of this interesting locality was within view had we been able to place it. The Jabbok issues from a gorge in the mountains of Eastern Gilead, which it cleaves about the centre: the scenery here has never been visited, but it must, from the configuration of the country, be very picturesque. When the Ammonites were driven out by Sihon they took refuge in the fast-

nesses of Eastern Gilead, and the defiles of the Upper Jabbok, which rises near their capital, Rabbath-Ammon, and then with a long sweep plunges into the recesses of these mountains, to reappear in a cleft of the high open country where we crossed it. Hence it is that when the Jews in their turn conquered Sihon, "from Arnon unto Jabbok," they appear to have stopped there, "for the border of the children of Ammon was strong" (Num. xxi. 24); and again it is said, "only unto the children of Ammon thou camest not, unto every place of the torrent Jabbok, and unto the cities in the mountains."

The mountains here alluded to were undoubtedly those of the eastern ranges, which we had been looking at all the morning, and which once, therefore, contained cities, the ruins of which remain yet to be discovered.

We had now traversed the whole province of Ajlun, from east to west, and from north to south, and throughout our wanderings we had not seen a tent, nor even a Bedouin, except those who were brought in as prisoners while we were at Irbid. We had met no travellers, except now and then a Jedeideh man; and had not passed through a dozen villages on our journey—of these not one contained more than a hundred houses, the amount of land belonging to each village averaging about ten acres per soul. Every acre we had traversed was susceptible of the highest cultivation; indeed it would be difficult

to imagine a country more highly favoured both as regards soil and climate. The crops consisted chiefly of wheat, barley, beans, and lentils; maize, millet, and peas were also grown. Immediately contiguous to the villages were invariably olive-groves, and often vineyards—the country being apparently especially adapted to the production of wine and oil. Fig, almond, pistachio, and other nut-bearing trees grow wild. Kali, or saltwort, is cultivated in some parts of Ajlun, the potass extracted from it being exported for the purpose of making soap. Flocks of goats are far more commonly met with than sheep, though these are also pastured on the hillside, chiefly by nomad Arabs. The peasants use oxen to plough with, and occasionally own a donkey or two, but very rarely a camel or a horse, though these animals are extensively owned by the nomads. The climate is eminently adapted for the cultivation of all descriptions of English farm and garden produce in its higher altitudes; while the productions of Syria and Palestine, such as tobacco, silk, sesame, flax, &c., are only not grown because the population is too poverty-stricken and apathetic to raise them. The soil of the northern part of the province is largely composed of basaltic trap, which, when disintegrated, forms the richest arable land. The mountain region is principally a chalk and limestone formation. Though the forests are said to contain bear and deer we saw no large game of any kind in them, but plenty of partridges.

While the agricultural capabilities of the country are thus neglected and undeveloped, it is possible that it also contains mineral resources only waiting to be explored; and there can be no doubt that, with an enterprising and industrious population, it might be made to furnish a revenue to the Turkish Government equal to any district of equal extent in the empire.

After crossing the Zerka or "Blue River," as the Jabbok is now called, we passed out of the government administered by the Mutessarif at Sheikh Sa'ad, into that which forms the Mutessariflik of the Belka, the seat of government being at Nablous—the ancient Shechem—to the west of the Jordan. While, however, the whole province, including that part lying to the west of the Jordan, is officially known as "The Belka," the district to which that name properly belongs lies to the east of the Jordan, and continues to form part of the ancient land of Gilead. The Belka is in fact exactly that region between the Mojib or Arnon, and the Zerka or Jabbok, which was called by the Romans Peræa, "the country beyond," although that term sometimes had a wider signification, and was made to include Ajlun, and even Jaulan. Thus the modern Belka, like the ancient Peræa, has a general signification; but the Peræa proper, and the Belka proper, have precisely the same boundaries.

Our path from the ford led up the steep grassy hillside, where broom white with blossom was growing

thickly. The character of the soil was now changed, and presented a red and friable appearance, indicating the presence of sandstone strata beneath. After an ascent of about an hour, we passed the ruined village of Alakuny on a hill to the left, and came upon signs of cultivation, though we had now left the country of villages. Throughout the Belka there is no settled population, excepting at the town of Salt. The Arabs come to the springs, near which, before they were driven away, the inhabitants were settled in villages, and cultivate the ground which the proximity of the water enables them to irrigate: having camped there long enough to plough and sow the land, they move off with their flocks, returning at harvest-time to reap the crops. Hence the country is covered with the ruins of these villages, which, however, often do not contain remains more important than those which a barbarous peasant-population would be likely to leave. Tumble-down huts, which had been constructed of large stones, are found lying in heaps; occasionally, however, we may come across a piece of carving, or the fragment of a column indicating buildings of a still older date, and of a departed civilisation—for the springs have gathered round them inhabitants from time immemorial; but it has been reserved to these latter days for the country to be so completely depopulated, that even the sedentary Arabs have been obliged to abandon it to their nomad kinsmen. Such a ruin

is Sihon, situated to the left of our path, and which may possibly, from its similarity of name, be the site of a town of such ancient date that it was called after the first ruler of this country whom we ever hear of, Sihon, king of the Amorites. Beyond this we entered a lovely district not heavily wooded, but with a sufficient amount of timber to render it park-like and beautiful; and at the spring of Allân, where there was a ruin with some stones showing marks of great antiquity, and some rock-tombs, there was an expanse of the richest cultivation, surrounded by trees, commanding a fine view, and offering the most attractive combination of soil, climate, and scenery which the heart of an intending settler could desire. At this time of year there were no Arabs here; but the cultivators, whoever they were, seemed quite satisfied to leave their growing crops, unfenced and untended, to the chapter of accidents. Our zaptiehs did not know whether they had been planted by wandering Arabs or by the people of Salt, from which town we were only six or seven miles distant.

We were all this time climbing up to the summit of the ridge of the Jebel Jilâd range. These are the mountains of Gilead proper; for although the mountains of Ajlun were embraced in the Scriptural appellation of "the mountains of Gilead," the fact that the Arabs have especially applied the name Jebel Jilâd to the mountains to the south of the Jabbok,

would seem to imply that they were for some reason more exclusively entitled to it. Pine seems commoner on this range than on the Jebel Ajlun, possibly from the fact that it is more of a sandstone than a limestone soil. At the top of the pass a new view over the mountains of Moab bursts upon us, and we pass a ruin where there are some broken columns, and descend sharply for nearly an hour, plunging finally into a ravine — turning a sharp angle of which we suddenly find ourselves in the presence of the town of Salt, which takes our breath away by its unexpected extent and relatively imposing appearance after our late experience among the squalid villages of Ajlun.

CHAPTER VII.

SALT—ITS TURBULENT POPULATION—PROGRESS OF CIVILISATION—LAND-TENURE—AGRICULTURE—ASCENT OF JEBEL OSH'A—SALT NOT RAMOTH-GILEAD—PROBABLE SITE OF RAMOTH-GILEAD AND RAMOTH-MIZPEH—WE HEAR OF THE RUINS OF RAHAB—REFUSAL OF THE BENI HASSAN ARABS TO TAKE US THERE—START FOR KALAT ZERKA.

SALT is situated on a high projecting spur formed by the junction of two gorges. It is surmounted by an old castle, still in tolerable repair, and the houses cluster one above another from the margin of the streams which meet in the valley to the crest of the hill. In fact, one might possibly climb from the bottom of it to the top, by mounting from one flat roof to another, so tightly packed are they, and so narrow are the muddy lanes by which they are divided. They are usually small one-storeyed mud-daubed tenements; and the shops in the principal street only differ from the dwellings in that the front is completely open in the daytime, after the manner of Eastern shops generally, so that the whole of the interior is exposed to view.

Besides the dense population which is, as it were,

hived on the steep projecting shoulder, there is a quarter of the town built on the opposite side of one of the gorges which gives it quite a civilised aspect; here are a number of houses boasting of whitewash, with two storeys and verandas; here, too, is the Serai or Government building, and the residence of the Caimakam, and a Greek monastery, and several schools. In one of the best of these houses lives Mr Halil, a Church of England catechist, by whom we were most hospitably received, and who allowed us to make his house our home during our stay in Salt. The change to a civilised room was a luxury which we were quite in a humour to appreciate after the last few nights on the flea-infested mud-floors of the Ajlun villages; and in order not to import any of our living freight into our new quarters, we spread our blankets in the sun and had them carefully and laboriously picked over.

Salt now contains a population which is estimated at 6000 souls, and is the only centre of population to the east of the Jordan. In the days of Burckhardt it only contained about 3000 inhabitants, but it has increased principally during the last ten years, owing to the establishment here of a seat of government. Prior to that time Salt, though nominally governed by the Porte, was practically independent; its lawless population knew no other restraints but that which a sense of self-preservation imposed upon them, for they were constantly quarrelling with each

other or fighting with the Arabs. There were, it seems, always two great rival factions who were constantly disputing for supremacy, except when they found it necessary to combine against the common enemy; and the history of the town is a record of the turbulent and warlike spirit of its inhabitants, who in former days looked upon the foreign traveller as a victim to be plundered, and upon the Turkish official as an enemy to be slain. When Ibrahim Pasha of Egypt took possession of this part of Syria, he named an Arab sheikh to be governor of the place, and installed him in the castle. The people promptly resented this assumption of supreme authority, and cutting off the sheikh's head, sent it to the Pasha as an evidence of their determination to preserve their independence.

Since, however, the Turkish Government has managed to sustain its authority, the inhabitants find that the security which has resulted therefrom has attracted strangers with capital, and that they have materially benefited by this sacrifice of their liberties. Salt has thus become by degrees the mercantile *entrepôt* for the whole region east of the Jordan; and the merchants here trade with the Arabs and advance them money on their crops and flocks; the latter are thus imperceptibly acquiring commercial instincts, for nothing civilises a man so rapidly as teaching him to borrow money and run into debt. They were also learning to sell not merely their

semen, but even their sheep, and to cultivate the land, a proceeding which the true Arab of the desert esteems in the highest degree derogatory, but which is becoming now necessary to the existence of the tribes in the Belka—so that the market here is much frequented by Bedouins.

The population of Salt is about equally divided between Moslem and Christian, the preponderance probably being rather in favour of the former. The majority of the Christians belong to the Greek Church, but there are a few Catholics and Protestants. So far as external appearance goes, it is not possible for the stranger to discriminate between the followers of the different religions. The whole population, men and women, are thoroughly Arab in look and bearing, though they have a type of countenance somewhat peculiar to themselves. Through their swarthy complexions I often observed a ruddy tinge ; and I was surprised to see how many of the women had auburn hair and blue eyes, while red-bearded men were quite common. Altogether the people are a decidedly handsome race, who have kept themselves free from foreign intermixture, and have retained their distinctive character, doubtless owing to their isolation, and a lawlessness which has rendered fraternisation difficult. It has been suggested that the people of Salt are the descendants of the Edomites, and have retained the characteristic of their progenitor Esau.

There is nothing in the dress of the people to distinguish them from Bedouins. The women wore the long blue gown: the men despise the nether garments even of Eastern civilisation, and often go into camp like other Arabs to cultivate their distant fields. Just below our window there was a copious fountain, from the old stone spouts of which gushed forth cascades, where women were employed all day filling their water-jars, and lingering to gossip; and their graceful and erect figures and finely-cut features were quite an interesting artistic study. The abundance of clear water with which the town is supplied, and its capacity for defence against the methods of barbaric warfare, have no doubt contributed to its importance and stability. It has always been in one sense a city of refuge; and to it, from time immemorial, have outlaws escaped from justice, and hither have peasants from the neighbouring villages, when attacked by Arabs, fled for shelter. The amount of land now farmed by its population is 1200 *feddan*—a *feddan* being the area of land which one yoke of oxen can plough in a day; and the revenue accruing to the Porte is about £1000 sterling a-year, which is far short of the proper proportion. The remainder of the revenue which the Government derives from the Belka is obtained from the Arabs by the dime-tax on sheep. As, however, the number which they are supposed to possess usually depends upon a private arrange-

ment arrived at between them and the tax-collector, by which the latter is recompensed for making the smallest possible return, no idea can be formed, from the total of taxes collected, of the number of sheep which are pastured on the rich plains of the Belka. They are as tempting now to the modern cattle farmer and grazier as they were to the children of Reuben and of Gad when they arrived here "with a very great multitude of cattle," and could not be induced to accept an heritage anywhere else; for "when they saw the land of Gilead and the land of Jazer, behold the place was a place for cattle." The ruins which have hitherto been supposed to be those of Jazer—though I have suggested the possibility of a different site—are situated a few miles to the south of Salt, where the plain country begins, which stretches to the confines of Moab.

In spite of there being a Caimakam to govern them, the Arabs of the Belka are tolerably independent of restraint, and the yoke sits lightly upon those of the town of Salt. The seat of government is at Nablous, on the other side of the Jordan, and it is too far distant for any direct supervision to be exercised by the Mutessarif there, who must depend upon his subordinates for reports on the state of his district. This official, isolated amidst the Arabs, finds that his life is made safe and pleasant to him just in the degree that he is not too severe; and in the absence of any regular troops to rely upon, his

influence must depend rather upon indulgence, not to say connivance, than upon force. However, there is no question that the last few years have worked an immense change in the attitude of the Arabs, which the recent arrival of some soldiers has done much to confirm; and that, with a still more decided exercise of authority and display of force, the Belka might be made as safe and desirable a location for farming as any which could be found elsewhere. So far the experience of a firm hand upon the Arabs here has been most encouraging. Wherever it has been tried it has succeeded, provided it has been applied with judgment and discretion. They are, indeed, too dependent upon the pasture and arable land to defy a Government which could drive them forth into the eastern deserts to be set upon by the Bedouins there, who claim a prescriptive right to its oases.

The Belka, however, is extensive and fertile enough to maintain a very large population in addition to the scattered Arabs with their flocks who now roam over it, and for whom, in the event of its becoming occupied by a settled population, special tracts could be reserved in case they should elect to remain in the country, and adopt sedentary habits.

The men of Salt seemed an idle and somewhat defiant-looking race, who passed most of their time lounging in groups at the street-corners, and criticising with curious gaze unusual visitors. The Turk-

ish Government has not yet ventured to enforce the conscription for the army here; and in order to avoid being liable for it, none of the inhabitants have taken out *tapoo* papers or title-deeds for the real property which they occupy and cultivate. The consequence is, that throughout the whole of the Belka there is not an acre owned for which a legal title can be shown. They now hold by prescriptive right alone, and numerous quarrels arise in consequence over the possession of land. The hillsides in the immediate vicinity of Salt are covered with the finest vineyards, from the grapes of which excellent wine could be made, if the art was properly understood; but not one of those who cultivate them can produce a scrap of paper giving him any right to do so—a state of things which at present makes the transference of land, except by the unsafe process of a mutual arrangement, impossible. The whole country, in fact, is governed by use and custom, tempered by the somewhat rough principle that might makes right; and now that civilisation is creeping in, the contest will not unnaturally arise between the "might" that is made by money, and that which consists of superior numbers and brute force. According to the best estimates I could obtain at Salt, not a twentieth part of this rich province is cultivated, and about a fourth part of the revenue to which it is entitled upon this reaches the Government. It is difficult to estimate what it

probably might be made to yield if it was occupied by a settled population, properly and honestly administered, and the ownership of land was placed upon a legal and safe basis.

We had not much opportunity of discussing these questions with the Caimakam on whom we called, as at a first interview with strangers the ordinary Turkish functionary, though exceedingly polite, is not always disposed to be communicative, and we had no opportunities afterwards of cultivating his acquaintance ; but he offered us every facility in his power for continuing our journey, and was especially anxious to impress upon us the fact that the most profound order and tranquillity reigned throughout his Caimakamlik, in spite of the great difficulties with which he had to contend.

In point of fact, both Christians and Arabs unite in a common feeling of dislike to the Turkish Government; but I think they would entertain this feeling towards any Government who undertook the task of keeping them in order. It is only since the period of our visit that the neighbouring province of Kerak has really submitted to the authority of the Porte, and a detachment of regular troops has, I believe, lately been sent there. This will complete the pacification of the whole country east of the Jordan, and prepare it for that development at the hands of a settled and peaceable population which I hope is in store for it.

Our future progress now became a matter of some difficulty, for we were in a country destitute of any accommodation except that furnished by the vermin-haunted tents of the Bedouin Arabs, upon whom we could not rely to provide grain for our horses, which we should therefore be obliged to carry with us. This involved extra baggage-animals; and though we ransacked the resources of the town, all we could obtain, after a day's search, was a couple of miserable little donkeys.

We availed ourselves of the delay to make an expedition to the top of Jebel Osh'a, said to be the highest peak of the range of Gilead; but as these mountains have never yet been properly surveyed, and the eastern part of the range is entirely unexplored, this is still a matter of doubt. The town of Salt is situated at an elevation of 2740 feet above the level of the sea, and Jebel Osh'a rises behind it to a height of nearly 1000 feet more. The path is a gradual ascent through vineyards, and other terraced cultivation, almost until we reach the summit, when a view burst upon us, for the extent and beauty of which we were quite unprepared. (In all Palestine, whether to the east or west of the Jordan, there is nothing, so far as my experience goes, to be compared to the prospect from Jebel Osh'a.) From here we can trace the whole course of the Jordan, from the Sea of Tiberias to the Dead Sea, glittering in the sun about 4500 feet below us. Every winding of

the river, throughout almost its entire length, is mapped out at our feet. On a projecting spur in the distance to the north, we could make out the Kalat er Rubud, which we had already visited, above Ajlun, with Hermon in the distance. The whole range of the Palestine hills, from Mount Jermak in the north to the hills behind Hebron to the south, displayed their long irregular line, each peak recognisable and replete with its own Scriptural association. We could even distinguish Mount Tabor, and a little to the south of it, the distant shoulder of Mount Carmel, while the Mount of Olives concealing Jerusalem from our view was easily detected. To the south we looked over the wooded mountainous country which intervenes between Salt and the plains of Moab, with Mount Nebo rising out of them; while to the east the continuation of the Gilead range limited the prospect. The mountain is called by the Arabs Osh'a, after the prophet Hosea, who is supposed to be buried here, and whose tomb is a spot venerated alike by Mohammedans and Christians, who come and offer at it prayers and sacrifices. The Mohammedans suppose all the early Biblical characters to have been giants, and have therefore constructed for Hosea a tomb thirty-six feet long, three feet wide, and three and a half high.

Not far from here are some ruins which retain the name of Jilâd, which some suppose to have been the site of Ramoth-Gilead; the more gener-

ally accepted opinion, however, is, that Salt itself occupies the site of that town, and that Jebel Osh'a is the Ramoth-Mizpeh (heights of the watch-tower) referred to in the Book of Joshua. There is no evidence of this, however; it is an hypothesis based upon the assumption that the mountain is too prominent a topographical feature to have been left out in the enumeration of the different landmarks of the frontier of the tribe of Gad, and would be a natural point to mention where it occurs in connection with Heshbon (Josh. xiii. 26). I am strongly inclined to think, on the contrary, that the Ramoth-Mizpeh here mentioned is identical with the Mizpeh on Galeed, where Jacob raised the heap, not far from Mahanaim, probably on the Jebel Kafkafa to which I have already alluded at some length (page 151). The text runs, "And from Heshbon unto Ramoth-Mizpeh and Betonim, and from Mahanaim unto the border of Debir." The exact frontiers of the three tribes to the east of the Jordan is a subject surrounded with difficulty, partly on account of many of the places named not having been yet identified, and partly because the definitions are in themselves not very clear, especially in the absence of sufficient reference to the points of the compass. Thus, to the tribe of Gad was given "Jazer and all the cities of Gilead," and "half the land of the children of Ammon, unto Aroer that is before Rabbah" (ver. 25); but to the

half tribe of Manasseh is given "half Gilead" (ver. 31), implying that the "cities of Gilead" were a group specially known by that name, and did not necessarily include many other cities which were in the northern part of Gilead allotted to Manasseh.

Again, while Gad's frontier is defined as being "from Heshbon unto Ramoth-Mizpeh," to Reuben was given "Heshbon and all her cities that were in the plain," some of which seem to have lain considerably to the north of Heshbon. Though, therefore, Heshbon was alluded to in connection with the frontier of Gad, it may possibly have been to the south of it: so, likewise, Mahanaim is mentioned both in the frontiers of Gad and Manasseh; but it, together with Betonim, were two of the cities of Gilead lying well inside the territory of the former, on the north-eastern boundary of which, and somewhere near them probably, was Ramoth-Mizpeh. The frontier connecting these places with Jazer and the cities of the plain round Heshbon, seems to have extended round "half the land of the children of Ammon, unto Aroer that is before Rabbah." Rabbah, or Rabbath-Ammon, was not included in the territory either of Reuben or Gad; and Aroer, which faces it, and is possibly identical with Arjun, must have indicated the south-eastern limit of the territory. From Mahanaim the frontier goes on to the border of Debir, which, as its name signifies, is a high pasture-land, and is probably identical with

Lo-debar, the birthplace of Machir, the son of Ammiel, who came to David while he was at Mahanaim (2 Sam. xvii. 27). Debir would in that case be somewhere between Mahanaim and the Sea of Tiberias, and complete the frontier to its north-western point, which, we learn, was on "the edge of the Sea of Chinnereth on the other side of Jordan eastward," from whence the western boundary follows the cities of the valley of the Jordan back to the group of cities in the plain of Heshbon.

If, as is generally supposed, and I think with reason, Ramoth-Mizpeh and Ramoth-Gilead are in close proximity, the latter is not the city of Salt, which has hitherto been the site appropriated to it, but it must have lain with Ramoth-Mizpeh on the north-eastern slopes of the mountains of Ajlun. This view is borne out by the fact that "to the son of Geber in Ramoth-Gilead pertained the towns of Jair, the son of Manasseh, which are in Gilead; to him, also, pertained the region of Argob, which is in Bashan, threescore great cities, with walls and brazen bars." If Salt be Ramoth-Gilead, the son of Geber would have had to traverse both the mountain-ranges of Gilead and then the plain of the Hauran, between three and four days' journey, before he could have reached Argob, probably the modern Lejah; and intervening between him and his territory would have been "Aminadab the son of Iddo, who had Mahanaim." Now it is extremely

unlikely that his residence would be thus widely separated from his territory; whereas if Ramoth-Gilead lay on the borders of that part of Gilead which belonged to Manasseh, his possession of the towns of Jair, the son of Manasseh, which are in Gilead, becomes most natural. These probably extended from the Jebel Kafkafa or Jerash, at or near which I believe Ramoth-Gilead to have been, to the Lejah. Another argument in favour of Ramoth-Gilead being upon these northern slopes, lies in the fact that it had been taken by the king of Syria, when Jehoshaphat and Ahab went to recapture it (1 Kings xxii.) Had it been identical with Salt, lying at the south-west corner of Gilead, the king of Syria coming from the north-east would have had to conquer all Gilead, with its cities, before he reached it, traversing two mountain-ranges and a most difficult country. Moreover, we should certainly have heard of so great an achievement, whereas Jehoshaphat specified Ramoth in Gilead apparently as the only town taken. If, on the other hand, it was situated on its north-eastern mountain-slopes, it would naturally be one of the first, perhaps the first, most important town to fall into the hands of the king of Syria, as he would first strike the frontier of Gilead here.

When, upwards of thirty years after this, the conquest of Gilead did take place, we are expressly told that "in those days the Lord began to cut Israel short: and Hazael smote them in all the coasts of

Israel; from Jordan eastward, all the land of Gilead, the Gadites, and the Reubenites, and the Manassites, from Aroer, which is by the river Arnon, even Gilead and Bashan" (2 Kings x. 32). Some years prior to this Joram had attacked Hazael at Ramoth-Gilead, had been severely wounded, and returned himself to Jezreel, sick. Then Jehu had been anointed king at Ramoth-Gilead as the successor of Joram, and had "driven furiously" to Jezreel, where he slew Joram. If Ramoth-Gilead be where I suppose it to have been, his course would have been due west on the plains we had traversed, the distance from thirty-five to forty miles, which he could easily have accomplished in a day. It would have been nearly double the distance from Salt.

The only argument in favour of Salt being Ramoth-Gilead is, that the Arabs have retained the name of Jilâd in the case of a ruin and the range behind the town, while they call the mountains to the north of the Jabbok, Jebel Ajlun; but no such distinction is made in the Bible, the whole country, including both ranges, being called Gilead; besides, it is probable that many other places besides Ramoth-Gilead had the suffix Gilead. The fact that Eusebius puts it fifteen miles west of Rabbath-Ammon, is counterbalanced by Jerome, who puts it that distance to the east, a position manifestly absurd. Ewald, who is extremely careful and painstaking in such matters, puts it at Reimun, a village on the

north of the Jabbok close to Jerash; while the Arabic version of the Book of Joshua, and the Jewish traveller Parchi, put it at Jerash itself (see Smith's 'Dictionary of the Bible'), a still more probable spot. Wherever it may have been, I think we are compelled to abandon the notion that it was to the south of the Jabbok, and, least of all, at Salt. I have entered at some length into a consideration of the claims of Salt to be identified with Ramoth-Gilead, and Jebel Osh'a with Ramoth-Mizpeh, because it seems to have been taken for granted that they are so by so many authorities; and I think the sites of these two important Biblical localities have yet to be ascertained, as there seems to be a danger of confusion arising in regard especially to the sites of the various Mizpehs mentioned in the Bible. Thus Mr Grove, whose authority upon all such points is too high to be lightly questioned, is of opinion that Jebel Osh'a was also the Mizpeh where the children of Israel assembled to decide what punishment was to be inflicted upon the tribe of Benjamin and the city of Gibeah, after the outrage on the Levite and his concubine. It seems to be quite impossible that this Mizpeh can have been situated to the east of the Jordan at all, but rather that it must have been the Mizpeh of Benjamin, also a place of great sanctity, and one of the three holy cities—the other two being Bethel and Gilgal—where the ark was kept, where Saul was chosen

king, and where Samuel judged the people, and which was in close proximity to Gibeah: for we read that, having decided which tribe should lead the attack, they rose up in the morning, encamped against Gibeah, were defeated, went up and wept before the Lord, evidently returning to Mizpeh to supplicate there; renewed the battle the second day, were again defeated, went back again to Mizpeh, and "came into the house of God" and "inquired of the Lord" (for the ark of the covenant of God was there in those days), and again renewed the battle the third day, when they were finally victorious. Now it would have been physically and materially impossible for them to have returned to the top of Jebel Osh'a on the other side of Jordan after the first day's battle, and then to have marched out again and fought all day at Gibeah, and got back again to Jebel Osh'a the same night, repeating the process three times, for no army could march from Jebel Osh'a to Gibeah of Benjamin under two whole days; but if we suppose them to be encamped on the modern Neby Samwil, which has been identified as the site of Mizpeh of Benjamin, the achievement becomes perfectly possible, for it is not above three miles from the modern Tuleil el Ful, which has been identified by Dr Robinson as the site of Gibeah of Benjamin. Ewald is of opinion that Mizpeh was a town and fortress to the north of the Jabbok.

The first mention we have of Salt, according to

Dr Porter—who also assumes it to be Ramoth-Gilead—in later times, occurs in the sixth century, under the Greek form Salton. He suggests that the fact of its being mentioned in the 'Notitiæ Ecclesiasticæ,' in connection with the addition of the word *Hieraticus* or "sacerdotal," is strong proof of its being the Levitical city of Ramoth-Gilead; but I think the fact that it was then the seat of a bishop's see is sufficient to account for this epithet, and that to apply to it the sacred character it was supposed to have had 2000 years before that time, is a somewhat strained assumption.

Salt first became a place of some importance during the Crusades, when Saladin established himself in this country. The castle is a large quadrangular edifice, built somewhat on the plan of the Kalat er Rubud, with a moat hewn out of the solid rock; some part of the building shows signs of great antiquity. It was built by the Sultan Bibars in the thirteenth century, and has been kept in tolerable repair since then. There is said to be a secret passage connecting it with the fountain in the town.

When we returned to Salt we found that all the sheikhs of the Beni Hassan tribe of Arabs had arrived at the summons of the Caimakam to settle a matter of tribute. The Beni Hassan occupy the country called Es Zuweit, to the east of Jerash, and from there southwards to the Jabbok, at the point where it forces its way through the eastern mountains of Gilead—in

fact, exactly that highland region which I had looked at with longing eyes from Tekitty, and which is still totally unexplored. It had now become doubly interesting in our eyes, for we had met a Syrian merchant in Salt who told us he had been into this country, and that it contained the ruins of an extensive city, the Arab name of which was Rahab, in the midst of which the Beni Hassan were camped. Here he described vast subterranean excavations, as well as the remains of fine edifices. We therefore applied to the Caimakam to make arrangements with the sheikh now here, and whose tent was actually pitched on the spot we desired to visit, to be our guide, and take us back with him; but in spite of the efforts of the Caimakam, the Beni Hassan sheikhs, one and all, declined the honour of our visit. Their country, they said, was not worth visiting; why should foreigners desire to intrude upon them? None had ever done so before, and they refused emphatically to be our hosts, or to have anything to do with us. The real reason for this, we were informed, was, that their country was too beautiful and fertile to be exhibited—not Es Zuweit, which is a pebbly plain—but the hill-country to the south of it, hence they were extremely shy of allowing strangers to come in and discover its merits. However this may be, the Caimakam said he did not wish to force them to take us with them if they refused to do so, but that we might proceed to Kalat Zerka, a post on

the Hadj road, and there perhaps induce a sheikh of another friendly tribe to be our guide. If we arrived as visitors thus escorted, however unwelcome we might be, the rites of hospitality would compel them to receive us kindly and treat us well. The practical difficulty in the way of this arrangement was that the time at our disposal was limited, and that our money was rapidly coming to an end. Indeed, had it not been for this, a sufficient *baksheesh* would doubtless have overcome their objections. As we had received before starting various accounts of the dangers which attended travel through this country, and the great risk of being robbed, we had brought very little gold with us; but knowing that Salt was a comparatively civilised place, I had put a couple of Bank of England five-pound notes in my pocket-book, feeling sure that no Arab would understand their value should I happen to be robbed, and hoping that they might stand me in good stead if I came across a partially civilised individual. Unfortunately, even at Salt, there was no one who answered that definition. I could not find a soul who had the least conception what a bank-note was; and I got tired of hawking about, in exchange for money, a suspicious-looking piece of paper, which, after being carefully inspected, was handed back to me with a look of distrust which was anything but complimentary. The consequence was that we were getting decidedly hard up; and

now that it came to hiring extra baggage-animals, laying in a stock of provisions, and feeing Arab sheikhs to act as guides, our prospects began to look gloomy. Then I was extremely anxious to push south as far as possible, so as to examine the richest portion of the Belka, and to go north-east was partially to retrace my steps. On the other hand, Canon Tristram had already pretty thoroughly explored the country to the south, the fertility and productiveness of which has been confirmed not only by his testimony but by that of other travellers; whereas nobody, so far as I knew, had ever been into the country in which the ruins of Rahab are situated. Nor were the existence of any such ruins known. Rahab, it occurred to us, might be the Rehob of the spies, a spot which has never been identified. "They searched the land from the wilderness of Sin unto Rehob as men come to Hamath." Dr Robinson has inferred from this that the position of Rehob was near Bainas, or Tel el Kady, but there is no trace of the name in that direction. The tribe of Asher contained two Rehobs, neither of which has been identified; but they are generally, with reason, from their position in Asher, considered to be distinct from the Rehob of the spies, which was on the way "as men come to Hamath." A city upon the northern slopes of Eastern Gilead would be exactly on the road as men come up to Hamath, supposing they entered the Holy Land at Hebron and

then crossed the Jordan at Jericho; indeed, the great Hadj road which now goes from the southern deserts, near to which the children of Israel had been wandering, to Damascus and Hamath, passes within a few miles of the position assigned to the modern Rahab. It also seemed extremely probable that this Rehob may be identical with the city called after Rehob, king of Zobah, whose territory in the time of David appears to have extended from the country of the Ammonites to the Euphrates, and whom the Ammonites hired to help them to fight against David (2 Sam. x. 6-8). The force consisting, besides the Ammonites, of "the Syrians of Zobah, and of Rehob, and Ishtob and Maachah" came "and pitched before Medeba" (1 Chron. xix. 7). Medeba is a city situated about five miles to the south of Heshbon, and about twenty to the south-west of Rabbath-Ammon. The ruins of Rahab were described to be situated about the same distance a little to the east of north from Rabbath-Ammon, and about half a day's journey south-east of Jerash; so that, had I known of their existence when at that place, it would have been comparatively easy to have visited them. Supposing Rahab to be this Rehob, it would have been on the north-east boundary of the Ammonite country, and just in a position to make common cause with the Ammonites against the victorious forces of David.

Altogether the temptation to make an attempt in

this direction proved too great to resist, and we decided to make a start for Kalat Zerka. The Caimakam sent us a couple of zaptiehs who, we were assured, were familiar with the country, and the senior of them was profuse in his promises to be an obedient and intelligent guide, and in his professions of service. Alas! he turned out a more unmitigated rascal than any former zaptieh of our acquaintance, which is saying a great deal. As the prospect of sleeping in Arab tents was not tempting, on account of the peculiar insect which infests them, we availed ourselves of the kindness of Mr Halil, who insisted upon our borrowing his light summer tent. Thus provided, with the old zaptieh leading, and the young one bringing up the rear, so as to keep the donkeys up to the mark, we made our exit from Salt early one morning at the end of March.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE DEPRESSED PLAIN OF BECHÁA—THE RUINS OF EL BASHA—RUINS OF JAJÛS, THE SITE OF JAHAZ OR JAZER—KALAT ZERKA—A MILITARY POST—SHEIKH DIAB—THE SUBTERRANEAN CITIES OF DERAT, BELOOLA, AND RAHAB—RABBATH-AMMON—THE GREAT THEATRE OCCUPIED BY CIRCASSIANS.

AFTER crossing the stream which brawls down the narrow gorge called the Wady Shaib, on the banks of which every available inch of ground is cultivated, in terraces rising one above another in most impossible places, we scrambled up the steep path that leads to the high southern plateau, which we reached in about an hour, and then traversed a rich grassy plain to a spring, or rather tank, around which, however, I did not observe any ruins. To the right the hills were heavily wooded, and amidst them the picturesque gorges commence which cleave the range laterally, carrying their torrents by the Wady Seidun, the Wady Azrak, the Wady Seir, and other ravines, down to the valley of the Jordan. The combination here of rich arable and pasture land, with fine forests, was all that could be desired for agricultural purposes. The land about here

was cultivated from Salt. The pond has an elevation of about 3000 feet above the sea, and near it is a mound, to the summit of which we rode and had a splendid view over the Becháa, or Bukaá, a depressed grassy plain, perfectly level, and eight or nine miles in length, by from four to six in breadth. It is surrounded by hills from 500 to 800 feet in height, while at its north-eastern extremity rise the higher mountains of Eastern Gilead. The hills on the southern side are partially wooded, those to the north are pasture.

This plain, which consists of a tract of rich land, is said originally to have been the basin of a lake, the water of which descended through the Wady Tananyeh, about three miles to the north of the Zerka. In the middle of it, about a couple of miles from the base of the hills on which we stood, we saw an Arab encampment. We found, when we arrived at it, that it consisted of twenty tents pitched in parallel lines so as to form a sort of street—ten tents being on each side. The occupants were Adwan Arabs, who received us very hospitably, and gave us some delicious sour milk. They were camped near a fine spring. I observed in places that the soil was shallow, and that there were lava-patches and exposures of flat rock occasionally, showing that it was more especially adapted for vine-culture.

Not many hundred yards from the Arab camp there was a ruin of some extent, and evidently of

great antiquity. The most prominent object was a square tower, probably of Roman origin, the walls of which were composed of large blocks of stone, and were standing to a height of ten feet. It had evidently been higher, but the top was a grass-grown mass of *débris;* within was an arched chamber twenty feet square. It was situated on a low mound, and all round were numerous vaults and excavations, the entrance to which were often substantial arches. They seemed to be extensively used by the flocks of goats belonging to the Arabs, who call the place El Basha. About a couple of miles beyond this we left the plain to ascend the hills on the south side, but just before doing so came upon another ruin, which, I think, was Safut, consisting principally of what had been one extensive building, but there was nothing to indicate its nature. The walls, too, were of massive blocks of stone, but only standing to a height of two or three feet—that is, there was seldom more than one stone left upon another. I did not observe any of the usual excavations. Our direction, so far, had been as nearly as possible due east. We now turned over the hills slightly to the southwards, rising about 500 feet, and finding ourselves upon a rolling somewhat stony plateau, thickly dotted with pollarded old trees, and presenting somewhat the appearance of an English park. These, we were told, gave a peculiar ash, useful for soap-making, and the branches are lopped off and burnt by the Arabs

for the purpose of selling the alkali, but I am ignorant of their botanical name. They were about the size and presented the appearance of stunted oak-trees. The temperature here was delightful, and there was a bracing freshness about the air which was most invigorating. After traversing this elevated region for about four miles we suddenly came upon a fertile valley, in the centre of which, near a spring, was a ruin, where we stopped to lunch, and which we found full of interest. The foundations were perfect of what had formerly been apparently a Roman temple. The length of the edifice was seventy-five yards and its breadth twenty-five. It had been divided in the middle, and in each compartment were the remains of a chamber. One of these was thirty-five feet by twenty. The walls, composed of massive stone, were still standing to a height of from ten to fifteen feet, but in neither case were the roofs existing. The other chamber was smaller, but the walls were more perfect; overshadowing them was a group of magnificent oak-trees. Ruins in these countries, as a rule, stand in such barren localities, that it was quite a new experience to come across any thus delightfully embowered. All round, the grass was growing knee-deep, and our animals revelled in the luxuriant pasture.

Besides the spring, which was situated a hundred yards or so from the ruin, there was a well in its immediate neighbourhood; this, however, had been

blocked with huge stones by the Arabs, but near it stood an ancient stone trough which may originally have been a sarcophagus. The name of this interesting spot is Jajûs, and I think it has a strong claim to be considered identical either with the ancient Jahaz or Jahaza or Jahazah, or else with Jazer. Jahaz is mentioned as one of the cities forming the frontier of the tribe of Reuben, and the difficulty of identifying Jajûs with it is, that in that case it would slightly seem to overlap the frontier of Gad. The south-eastern town of Gad, as I have before shown, was Aroer which faces Rabbath-Ammon. Now Rabbath-Ammon, as nearly as I could calculate, lies about eight miles due south of Jajûs, while Aroer, according to the description in the Bible, ought to have been if anything to the north of Jajûs. Still it is quite possible that Aroer may have been seven or eight miles to the north of Rabbath-Ammon, and yet be near enough to be defined as "before (or facing) it." In that case the difficulty is to some extent removed;[1] under any circumstances the frontier of Reuben in the Biblical maps seems to have been placed too far south. It certainly ran on the easterly side from Aroer on the Arnon to Aroer that is before Rabbath-Ammon. And if the latter Aroer was to the north-west of that

[1] There is a ruin, to which I have already alluded, called Arjun, between Jajûs and Rabbath-Ammon, which may be the Aroer of Gad; but this requires verification.

city beyond it, the northern frontier probably ran from Beth Nimrah on the plain of the Jordan opposite Jericho in a north-easterly direction to Rabbath-Ammon, or possibly to the north of it, instead of due east to a point ten miles to the south of that city, as it is at present delineated in the maps.

Ewald places Jahaz a little to the south of Ammon, but his assumption is merely based upon conjecture. Eusebius places it between Medeba and Dibon, which brings it down almost to the southern frontier of Reuben instead of the northern. Dr Porter does not seem to admit the existence of two Aroers, but considers that the Aroer which faces Rabbath-Ammon is identical with Aroer on the Arnon, which was the most southern town in Reuben, and which, being at least forty miles from Rabbath-Ammon, cannot possibly be considered as "before" or "facing" it; but here, again, we have a difficulty, for we are told that "the children of Gad built Dibon, and Ataroth, and Aroer." These three towns are all situated in the south of the territory of Reuben, Dibon and Aroer being only about three miles apart. There can be no doubt about their identity; but why the Gadites should have rebuilt towns forty miles away from their own frontier, at the southern extremity of Reuben's territory, can only be explained upon the hypothesis that it was done before the land to the east of the Jordan was divided, but after the three tribes had decided to

occupy it, and that in the subsequent division Reuben obtained some of the towns built by the Gadites, though it would not seem that the Gadites obtained in compensation any of the cities built by the Reubenites.

That there were two Aroers is, I think, clearly implied by the way they are described. In the case of Reuben it is said,—"And their coast was from Aroer, that is on the bank of the river Arnon, and the city that is in the midst of the plain, and all the plain by Medeba" (Josh. xiii. 16). While the frontier of Gad is thus defined,—"And their coast was Jazer, and all the cities of Gilead, and half the land of the children of Ammon, unto Aroer that is before Rabbah" (ver. 25). Mention is also repeatedly made elsewhere of Aroer as a town in Gad, apparently to distinguish it from Aroer on the Arnon. The latter town being forty miles distant from the frontier of Gad settles the question of there having been two Aroers.

Jahaz is chiefly interesting from the circumstance that it was at this point that Sihon king of the Amorites resisted the passage of Moses and the Israelites, when permission was requested of him that they should be allowed to pass peaceably through his territory on their way across the Jordan to take possession of Palestine. It may be objected that the position of the ruins is too far to the north and east; but it must be remembered that

Moses had skirted Moab in order to avoid a collison, and "sent messengers out of the wilderness of Kedemoth unto Sihon king of the Amorites with words of peace" (Deut. ii. 26). And it is further stated that "Sihon gathered all his people together, and went out against Israel into the wilderness: and he came to Jahaz, and fought against Israel" (Num. xxi. 23); thus showing that the scene of the whole transaction was in the extreme eastern part of the country, and on the verge of the desert. The position of Jajûs corresponds to this, for we reached the desert in the evening of the same day. It is true there is a discrepancy in the narrative, and that in the account given in Numbers the messengers are said to have been sent from the top of Pisgah, which is generally supposed to be Nebo; but, under any circumstances, it is clear that Moses could not continue his march with an enemy advancing from the desert upon his flank; and his subsequent operations rather go to prove that the scene of the battle was far to the east, for it resulted in the possession of the land "from Arnon unto Jabbok, even unto the children of Ammon." The Jabbok, on which was situated Rabbath-Ammon, being, as I have said, about eight miles distant, would answer this description. After possessing the land they advance upon Og the king of Bashan, attacking and defeating him at Edrei. Their line of march from Jahaz would be north for about fifty miles along the present Hadj

road, from which Jajûs is about twelve miles distant. They would thus skirt, by keeping along the edge of the desert, the strong places of the children of Ammon in Eastern Gilead, into which we are told "they did not come." Jahaz was one of the cities given with its suburbs to the Merarite Levites (1 Chron. vi. 78), and is denounced in Isaiah (Isa. xv. 4) in these terms,—"And Heshbon shall cry, and Elealeh: their voice shall be heard even unto Jahaz." Elealeh is between Jajûs and Heshbon, and distant from the former about fifteen miles. Identically the same expression occurs in Jeremiah (xlviii. 34).

There is another town, the site of which has never been properly identified, while its name seems to have a certain similarity to Jajûs, and the claims of which it may be worth while considering. This is Jazer or Jaazer, or, in its extended form, Jaezzeir (see Smith's Dict.) It was a city of the Amorites, of some importance, as may be gathered from its giving its name to the surrounding district. When the children of Reuben and of Gad "saw the land of Jazer, and the land of Gilead, that, behold, the place was a place for cattle," they decided upon remaining there. It is afterwards called Jazer of Gilead (1 Chron. xxvi. 31). After the battle with Sihon at Jahaz, it was taken by the Israelites on their way to Bashan by the route I have already described. It is one of the towns mentioned in connection with

Aroer and Jogbehah as having been rebuilt by the Gadites (Num. xxxii. 35). It was one of the cities of Gad whose "coast was Jazer, and all the cities of Gilead, and half the land of the children of Ammon, unto Aroer that is before Rabbah." Now Jogbehah may, I think, be satisfactorily identified with Jubeihah, a ruin which we afterwards passed on our way from Ammon (Rabbah) to Salt, and lies, as nearly as I could judge, about four miles south-west of Jazer; it is very likely, therefore, to have been coupled with it. When Joab passed over Jordan to number the people, "he pitched in Aroer, on the right side of the city that lieth in the midst of the valley of Gad, and toward Jazer." It was given with its suburbs to the Merarite Levites, and its doom is pronounced both by Isaiah and Jeremiah, in terms implying that it was celebrated for its vineyards: "For the fields of Heshbon languish, and the vine of Sibmah." Sibmah was, according to Jerome, a suburb of Heshbon. "The lords of the heathen have broken down the principal plants thereof, they are come even unto Jazer, they wandered through the wilderness: her branches are stretched out, they are gone over the sea. Therefore I will bewail with the weeping of Jazer, the vine of Sibmah." In Jeremiah there is the same allusion to the vine of Sibmah and the weeping of Jazer, and he continues: "Thy plants are gone over the sea, they reach even to the sea of Jazer: the spoiler is fallen upon

thy summer fruits and upon thy vintage." That the surrounding country was, above all, adapted for vine-culture, was a fact which forced itself specially upon our notice; and our servants, who came from the Lebanon, and were accustomed to the vineyards there, never ceased pointing out to us the superior excellence of the country round Jajûs. That a large pond or reservoir might easily be formed in the valley in which it was situated, and which in wet weather was evidently marshy, might account for the allusion to the sea. It is still more probable, however, that the allusion was to the lake which once covered the now depressed plain of the Becháa, which must have been between forty and fifty miles in circumference, and which from its proximity would very naturally be called the sea of Jazer, the vines on the hills round which would stretch their branches over it.

Eusebius and Jerome, who are by no means accurate generally in their definitions, lay down the position of Jazer as eight or ten Roman miles west of Rabbath-Ammon, and fifteen from Heshbon. Had they added north, they would almost exactly have hit Jajûs, which is, however, considerably more than fifteen miles from Heshbon. They further place it at the source of a stream which flows into the Jordan, whereas the wady in which Jajûs is situated falls into the Jabbok. There are two other sites westward of Rabbath-Ammon, which are sev-

erally supposed by Burckhardt and Seetzen to be those of Jazer; but one is a great deal too far to the west, and nothing definite so far has been discovered. There is a Jazel near Heshbon, but this would not be in the land of Gilead. Jahaz and Jazer were evidently not far distant from each other, and have so many points in common that I must leave it to some one more competent than myself to decide between the relative claims of the two places. But that Jajûs represents the site either of one or the other I do not entertain much doubt.

While we were sitting at luncheon under the shade of one of the fine old trees, an Arab came up and reverently kissed a huge slab of stone which, laid horizontally upon two upright blocks, formed the entrance to an Arab burying-place. It was enclosed by a circle of ancient stones almost druidical in their arrangement, and, we were informed, contained the tomb of a sheikh celebrated for his sanctity. Several smaller circles of the stones, which had been part of the ruins, formed other graveyards. We followed down the valley for a quarter of a mile, observing all the way traces of the ancient city and scattered ruins, and then on a low hill on the right came upon an extensive area of excavations. The mound looked like a gigantic rabbit-warren, so honeycombed was it with vaults, many of the niches of which were still in an excellent state of preservation, while the foundations of houses and

their walls, to a height of three or four feet, showed that a populous part of the city had once been here. Whether the vaults had been used as dwellings or as granaries it was impossible to determine, but probably the main street had led down the centre of the valley from the temple to this spot, which formed the mercantile quarter, with stores and warehouses. That it had been a place of considerable importance in the time of the Romans there can be little doubt. Indeed the whole of this neighbourhood would be well worthy a far more extended examination than we were able to give it. We followed down the wady for an hour and a half from this point, the hillsides gradually changing their appearance and becoming more barren, and reached in the centre of the valley the Ain el Ghazal, or spring of the gazelle. This is generally put in the maps in the valley of the Zerka; but all the maps of this region are quite inaccurate, as it has never been surveyed: and Dr Smith's excellent map, usually so correct, is here quite at fault, for it puts Kalat Zerka three or four miles to the east of the Zerka or Jabbok, whereas it is actually upon it. The wady which we had followed so far is called the Wady Zorbi, and falls into the valley of the Jabbok about two miles from the Ain el Ghazal. The fountain itself is a very copious one, bursting out of the side of a small narrow ravine or cleft in the valley. The stream becomes almost immediately

large enough to be used for irrigating purposes, and the Arab cultivation begins from this point and continues down to the Jabbok, where that stream is used in like manner, diverted into numerous rivulets, and irrigates the level bed of the valley, which averages half a mile and sometimes more in breadth. The whole of this area was an expanse of waving spring crops, and looked like a broad river of the brightest green winding between hillsides covered with a low wormwood scrub, from amid which red crags projected, forming here and there caves and fissures. Near the Ain el Ghazal we met an Arab sheikh armed with a spear and accompanied by two attendants. With the exception of the Arab we had seen at Jajûs, we had met no other human beings since leaving the Arab camp in the Becháa. We rode for an hour and a half down the valley of the Jabbok,—the river itself was thickly fringed with oleanders,—when we came upon the ruined fort of Er Rusaifa. The outside walls — of which little more than the foundations were visible — were about eighty yards by fifty; in the centre were the remains of a tower about twenty feet square, eight or ten feet of the walls of which were still standing. This was in all probability an outpost built by the Jefnides or Ghassanides, Arabs who immigrated here from Southern Arabia, and occupied this country for about five centuries after the Roman authority had declined. To them are due

most of the massive stone forts on the Hadj road. Soon after this we came upon some Arabs of the Beni Adiyet tribe engaged in irrigating. Many of the men at work were negroes, and are the slaves of the Arabs. The principal encampment of the tribe was distant a mile or so to the left, and we sent one of them to tell the sheikh to come and meet us at Kalat Zerka, as he was the man whose assistance we hoped to obtain for our further progress. Half an hour afterwards we reached the broad camping-ground of the Hadj on the banks of the Zerka; and on the other side, on a hill about 300 feet above the river, stood the square fort of Kalat Zerka, surrounded by the white bell-tents of some Turkish soldiery. We spurred across the ford and up the steep slope, to the intense astonishment of some soldiers who were leading down their mules to water, and who little expected to be suddenly confronted with Europeans in this remote corner of the desert.

We soon found out the officer in command, who turned out to be a captain whose life had been spent in service against the Arabs, and who had not been engaged in the late war. He received us most kindly in his diminutive tent, and we were soon joined by the lieutenant and assistant-surgeon, or rather apothecary, who was the best educated of the three, and spoke French fairly. He had been through the late campaign in Bulgaria, and spoke in

high terms of the medical and hospital assistance which had been rendered by England on that occasion. The detachment consisted of 200 men of the mounted mule infantry, the same regiment which we had already met at Irbid,—they had only arrived here ten days before. Prior to that no garrison had been established here for ten years, but Midhat Pasha was determined to put a stop to the raids of the Beni Sukhr and Anazeh across the desert frontier into Eastern Palestine, and this detachment had been moved down here to check them. They were the most advanced post on the Hadj road southwards, but since then I hear that some troops have been sent to Kerak.

Kalat Zerka is the extreme limit of vegetation eastward from the Jordan. Here begins the desert, which extends without a break, except an occasional oasis, to the Euphrates. From here it is about ten days' journey on a camel to Bagdad. The Hadj takes a week to reach this station from Damascus, from which it is about 120 miles distant due south ; this does not include ten days' halt at Mezarib. Standing on the edge of the hill, we looked southward and eastward over the rolling desert, while to the north-west were the high wooded mountains of Eastern Gilead, and south-west the valley of the Jabbok. The stream here, flowing from its sources near Rabbath - Ammon, makes an immense bend, this being its extreme eastern point.

It now trends north-westward, and forces its way through the gorges which cleave the mountains of Gilead. There is no certainty that the Israelites ever settled themselves so far to the east as this, as it was some miles beyond the eastern frontier of Gad, though there can be little doubt that the force sent by Moses to conquer Bashan must have passed by this spot after the battle of Jahaz—Edrei, the capital of Og, and the scene of the victory of the Israelites over him, being, as I have already said, about fifty miles to the north. In the neighbourhood of Kalat Zerka took place, in all probability, some of those fierce fights against the Midianites, the narrative of which is contained in Holy Writ. While the land of Midian proper was on the east coast of the Gulf of Akaba, it is evident that by the Midianites were understood all the Abrahamic Arabs who wandered over the desert as far north as the Lejah, and whose range included Kalat Zerka; for the five princes captured by Moses were "dukes of Sihon dwelling in the country,"—evidently, therefore, tributary to the Amorites, who, together with the Ammonites, occupied this region. That they should have crossed Eastern Palestine and given battle to Gideon so far north as Jezreel, on the plain of Esdraelon, proves that their predatory excursions were by no means limited to the southern deserts. After their defeat by that warrior they fled across Jordan and made a second stand, apparently on the frontier of their own terri-

tory, at a place called Karkor. Hither Gideon followed them, and "went up by the way of them that dwelt in tents on the east of Nobah and Jogbehah, and smote the host" (Judges viii. 11). Now Jogbehah is, as I before said, identical with Jubeihah, a ruin only a few miles distant: it is probable, therefore, that as "the way of them that dwelt in tents" begins here, Karkor was in this immediate neighbourhood, perhaps Kalat Zerka itself.

Again, when Moses attacked the Midianites, it was evidently from this quarter; for immediately after the account of his campaign against them, and the immense plunder which he obtained, the tribes of Reuben and Gad, who took part in the operations, "saw the land of Jazer, that it was a good place for cattle."

There can be little doubt, moreover, that this vicinity was the scene of Jephthah's triumph over the Ammonites, to which I have previously alluded. "He smote them from Aroer even until thou come to Minnith, even twenty cities, and unto the plain of the vineyards" (Abel-ceramim), on the Yarmuk. Now two stations on the Hadj road north of Kalat Zerka is a place called Mineh; and among the ten towns mentioned by El Makreezee, an Arabic writer in the year 825 of the Hegira, as still existing, and which had originally belonged to the Midianites, in the direction of Palestine, are El Minyeh and El Má-eyn (see Smith's Dict.) El

Má-eyn is undoubtedly Ma'an, one of the stations to the south of Kalat Zerka, and still a place of considerable importance as an Arab station, and containing a settled population; it lies about twenty miles to the east of Petra. El Minyeh seems to be identical with Mineh, which was in all probability the ancient Minnith: the pursuit of Jephthah would in that case have commenced near Kalat Zerka, and followed up the Hadj road to the Yarmuk.

That Kalat Zerka must always have been a strong military position there can be little doubt. On an isolated hill immediately overhanging the most eastern point of the most eastern stream in Palestine, with the desert behind and the fertile lands of Gilead in front, it was the key to this part of the country; and though I did not observe any traces of ancient ruins on the top of the hill, there are some near the ford to the right, called Hadid. According to the Peutinger Tables, Kalat Zerka as nearly as possible occupies the site of the Roman town of Gadda, which does not, however, play any prominent part in the history of this region.

After the Turkish captain had regaled us with coffee and cigarettes, he offered to show us over the fort. This was in such an extremely filthy condition, and in places so much out of repair, that the soldiers preferred living in their tents; but it was quite capable of being made habitable, and in the

event of the troops remaining during winter, would be occupied by them. It consisted of an outer wall, about seventy yards each way, enclosing a courtyard, in the centre of which was a massive square tower about fifty feet high, composed of immense blocks of stone. It was entered by a pointed archway, the interior was a single chamber about fifty feet square, which was inhabited by an Arab sheikh and his family. They were the occupants and guardians of the fort in the absence of the troops, and the latter had not thought it necessary to turn them out. As the only light came through the door, and as the walls within were thickly grimed with the soot and smoke of ages (for the place has always been occupied by Arabs, who make their fire inside), it was both dark and dirty work groping our way through women, babies, and vermin to the narrow stone stair that led to the top. There were other apartments above the lower room, which were full of *débris* and rubbish, to be traversed before we reached it, and then we came upon the stone roof, from which a fine view over the surrounding country was obtained. In the courtyard below were small rooms built under the wall which might be used for barracks. The building was evidently one of great antiquity, but I could find no trace of inscription or carving, though there may be plenty of both under the soot, if there were light enough to look for them. The probability is that the fort dates from the great wars of the Arabs

here against the remnants of the authority of the Byzantine empire in the seventh century; for the Arabs, in spite of their nomadic habits, were good fort-builders, and they may have been the architects of Kalat Zerka, though it is possible they may have found the materials on the spot, as its strategic position doubtless necessitated a fort here before their time. In the early part of the same century, the whole of this country was conquered by the armies of Chosroes, king of Persia, who built the magnificent palace of Mashita, the extensive ruins of which were discovered by Sir Henry Layard in 1839, and have since been visited and most elaborately described by Canon Tristram. Mashita is about twenty miles to the south of Zerka, but there was nothing about the architecture of the latter to warrant the supposition that it was the work of the Persians, who only held the country for ten years.

Meantime the sun was setting over the eastern deserts, and our servants, tent, and baggage, which were under the charge of the second zaptieh, whom we had last seen at Jajûs, had not turned up. Suleiman, the old zaptieh, who had been most uncommunicative, ignorant, and disobliging all the way, told us he had sent them by a short cut; but we had not travelled sufficiently fast, by what we now found had been a circuitous route, to warrant the delay. Suleiman himself, however, volunteered to go and look for them, an office which he performed by

riding down to the river, fording it, dismounting, and going to sleep flat on his back on the Hadj encampment on the other side within full view of us, as a piece of bravado, leaving his horse to graze. The captain kindly sent some soldiers down to rouse him up and bring him back; but he was a hardened old sinner, and did not seem to care much for threats of martial law.

In the interval Sheikh Diab of the Beni Atiyeh, who was to be our escort to the Beni Hassan, arrived, but he brought us small consolation. He seemed extremely disinclined to undertake the responsibility of introducing us to those interesting nomads; probably he felt it would make him unpopular, and interfere with his future good relations with them. It was impossible, he said, to go to Rahab and back in one day. The way was through the mountains, a bad and difficult road, and food for the horses other than grass at this season impossible to be obtained from the Arabs except in very small quantities. I asked him if he would take us to the top of the highest mountain in Eastern Gilead, and this he consented to do, though he said it would take us five hours to reach it, two hours over the rolling prairie and three hours through the forest in a north-westerly direction. The whole of this group of mountains, he told us, were heavily timbered; they probably attain an altitude of nearly 4000 feet. Rahab, it seemed, was in the Es Zuweit

country, rather more to the east. While I was discussing our prospects with him the mules arrived, to our great relief—for it had become dark, and our dinner was still to be cooked and our tent pitched; but now it turned out that the quantity of grain with which our donkeys were laden was much less than we intended, and that the daily amount of consumption would seriously curtail our projected trip. At Kalat Zerka there was no grass, and Captain Phibbs's two Arab horses were too valuable to put on short commons. The captain did not seem to take the hints I gave on the subject; still we were loath to give up our enterprise, and put off a final decision till the following morning.

We had scarcely stretched some quilts with which Mr Halil had kindly supplied us on the hard stone ground, when our doubts were removed by a shower of rain—fortunately not a heavy one, but still indicating a change in the weather, which made an expedition to a mountain to be a very questionable proceeding so far as the prospect of a good view was concerned, and a two days' excursion to Rahab still less desirable. Our servants were sleeping under the sky on the wet ground outside, and our own tent was not calculated to keep out the rain, as we subsequently discovered. In the morning the sky looked gloomy and overcast. Our zaptiehs predicted a week's heavy down-pour, but we knew that they probably had interested motives in wishing us to

curtail our trip. The forage question was the one which really turned the scale, and we reluctantly gave the word for Rabbath-Ammon as our day's journey.

Since my return to England I regret far more deeply than I did at the time not having explored the subterranean cities of Derat, Beloola, and Rahab. Of these the two latter have never been visited; and indeed their existence has never been suspected prior to the report which I received at Irbid of Beloola from the Tunisian officer, and at Salt of Rahab from the Syrian merchant. I did not at the time fully credit their reports, for I had not then read Wetzstein's description of Derat—from which, when at Mezarib, I was only five miles distant—and who is the only traveller who has partially explored its hidden mysteries. It is probable, from the descriptions I received of Beloola and Rahab, that they are in no way inferior to Derat; and in order that the future explorer may form some idea of the interest which may attach to an examination of these unknown and hitherto unheard-of underground cities, I annex a translation of Wetzstein's account of what he saw at Derat. He seems to consider it identical with Edrei, the capital of Og; and in his 'Reisebericht über Hauran und die Trachonen' (Berlin, 1860), pp. 47, 48, he says:—

"I visited *old* Edrei—the subterranean labyrinthine residence of King Og—on the east side of Zumle Hills. Two sons of the sheikh of the village

— one fourteen, the other sixteen years of age — accompanied me. We took with us a box of matches and two candles. After we had gone down the slope some distance, we came to a dozen rooms, which at present are used as goat-stalls and store-rooms for straw : the passage became gradually smaller, until at last we were compelled to lie down flat and creep along. This extremely difficult and uncomfortable process lasted for about eight minutes, when we were obliged to jump down a steep wall several feet in height. Here I noticed that the younger of my two attendants had remained behind, being afraid to follow us; but probably it was more from fear of the unknown European than of the dark and winding passages before us.

"We now found ourselves in a broad street which had dwellings on both sides of it, whose height and width left nothing to be desired. The temperature was mild, the air free from unpleasant odours, and I felt not the slightest difficulty in breathing. Further along there were several cross-streets, and my guide called my attention to a *rôsen* (a window or hole in the ceiling for air), like three others which I afterwards saw closed up from above. Soon after, we came to a market-place, where for a long distance, on both sides of a pretty broad street, there were numerous shops in the walls, exactly in the style of the Dukkan (*i.e.*, shops) that are seen in the Syrian cities. After a while we turned into a side street,

where a great hall, whose roof was supported by four pillars, attracted my attention. The roof or ceiling was formed of a single slab of jasper, perfectly smooth and of immense size, in which I could not perceive the slightest crack. The rooms for the most part had no supports; the doors were often made of a single square stone; and here and there I noticed also fallen columns. After we had passed several more cross alleys or streets, and before we had reached the middle of this subterranean city, my attendant's light went out. As he was lighting it again by mine, it occurred to me that possibly both our lights might be put out, and I asked the boy if he had the matches? 'No,' he replied; 'my brother has them.' 'Could you find your way back if our lights should be put out?' 'Impossible,' he replied. For a moment I began to feel alarmed in this under-world, and urged an immediate return. Without much difficulty we got back to the market-place, and from there the youngster knew the way well enough. Thus, after a sojourn of more than one hour and a half in this labyrinth, I greeted the light of day."

I believe Beloola to lie in the isolated mountain Jebel Kafkafa, or its immediate neighbourhood, and it may possibly prove to be the site of the ancient city of Argob. I trust that in the survey which it has been decided shall be undertaken to the east of the Jordan by the Palestine Exploration Fund, the

attention may be bestowed on this unexplored range which I feel sure it merits; while the region lying between Jerash and Kalat Zerka is also entirely unknown, and it is about half-way between these two places, as nearly as I can judge, that the subterranean city of Rahab will be found. It is possible that they were used in old time as cities of refuge—indeed Wetzstein says that even in the present day he believes that in the case of a devastating war the population of the village of Derat, which lies directly over the subterranean city, would take refuge in its underground recesses. When we were at Kalat Zerka, the tents of the Beni Hassan were described as being pitched immediately over Rahab.

We now found to our disgust that our way lay back along the valley of the Jabbok, and that for two hours and a half we should have to retrace our steps; whereas if we had taken the short cut by which our servants had been sent the night before, we should have varied our route, which, in a country teeming with ruins, is always desirable, especially if it has not previously been explored, as was the case here. It was useless to expostulate with the old zaptieh, who seemed to take a malicious pleasure in bringing us back over the old road. We had not gone far along it when we were overtaken by the Sheikh Diab, who brought us a lamb to propitiate us, apparently alarmed at our sudden departure without his escort in the desired direction, con-

sidering the letter which we had brought him from the Caimakam, ordering him to place his services at our disposal. He offered, however, to accompany us to Ammon, and be our guide from there to Heshbon on the following day. This offer we accepted; and he followed in our train, accompanied by a beautiful Palmyrian greyhound, scarcely larger than the gazelle which he hunted with it—a graceful fawn-coloured creature, with the most delicate limbs, and pendent ears and drooping tail, both covered with long fluffy hair.

We stopped and had a delicious swim in the Jabbok, at a spot where it had been dammed for irrigating purposes, in a thicket of oleanders. I never have seen any stream so full of fish, which is accounted for by the fact that the Arabs never indulge in piscatorial pursuits. Most of them resembled chub, running up to a weight of two or three pounds. The doctor at Kalat Zerka told me he pulled them out as fast as he could throw in his line; and I should certainly have tried to scoop them out with my hat, if that civilised article had not been replaced by the far more comfortable Arab *kufeiyeh*. Near here we also saw a couple of otters, and on one field of young corn I counted a flock of a hundred storks. In the shape of game, we have seen, since entering the Belka, quail, partridges, wild-duck, and snipe.

We continued to follow the valley of the Jabbok, after passing the point at which we had entered it the

day before. It now contracted considerably, and the sandstone cliffs were curiously honeycombed with caves. In about an hour and a half from the mouth of the Wady Zorbi, or four hours from Kalat Zerka, we came upon the ruins of Rabbath-Ammon at a point where the valley again widened. Immediately on the right on entering the vast expanse of ruins, was an excavation in the cliff, entered by a handsome doorway, flanked on each side with Corinthian pilasters, with a carved lintel overhead, and an ornamented ceiling inside. It was a small oblong room, and was probably used as a tomb. From this point to the end of the ruins at their south-eastern extremity, where traces of the original gateway still exist, is about a mile and a half, and throughout this entire distance we are surrounded with the majestic remains of one of the most ancient and celebrated of historical cities.

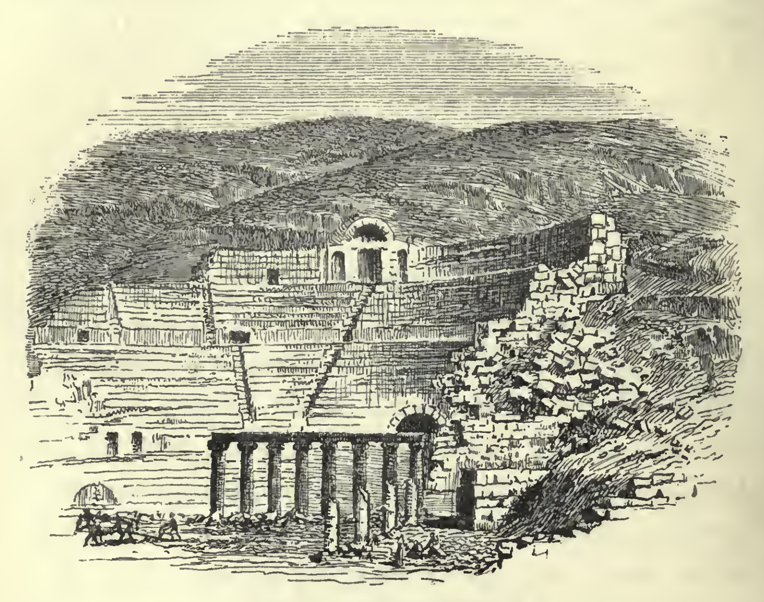
We decided to encamp on a green spot, sheltered by the massive remains of an old wall, close to the river brink, and immediately facing the grand theatre. Here we were quickly surrounded by a group of Circassians who have been settled by the order of the Government amidst these ruins. Like those I had met at Kuneitereh, they no sooner found that I had travelled in their native valleys, and knew the names of some of their chiefs, than they were full of politeness and offers of service. They said that 500 of them had arrived here about three months pre-

viously, but that the majority had speedily become discontented with their prospects and had gone away; —150, including women and children, were all that remained, and these had decided to settle here. They had already planted a vegetable garden, had got a good herd of cattle, a flock of sheep, and seemed likely to do well. The spot had been selected, in the first instance, on account of the shelter which the caverns and old rock-cut tombs afforded; and they were so satisfied with these primitive and singular lodgings that they had not yet begun to build, but they had discovered a still more striking and interesting method of temporarily housing themselves, and one which illustrated in a very remarkable manner the irony of history. The grand theatre, which was constructed to accommodate 6000 spectators, and is nearly 100 yards in breadth, contains forty-three rows of seats, divided into three tiers by broad passages (*præcinctiones*), and the *adita* leading behind the seats, and going completely round the horse-shoe theatre, opened upon them. These *adita*, which had become choked by the accumulated rubbish and *débris* of some fourteen or fifteen centuries, the Circassians had cleared out, and turned into lodgings for their wives and little ones. Standing at our tent I watched their women going in and out of these corridors, once frequented by Roman ladies of fashion. I saw groups of these poor exiles in their ragged but picturesque attire, hunted by the

persecution of a Christian nation from one country to another, to make way for what we call civilisation, at last taking refuge in those very vaults where, eighteen centuries before, persecuted Christians used to be confined previous to ministering by their sufferings to the cruel instincts and the bigotry of another civilisation and another religion. On the floor of the old forum, whose eight noble Corinthian columns are still standing, and where toga'd dignitaries used to exert their eloquence, two pretty little Circassian girls were weeding onions. A man was ploughing in and out between beautifully carved pedestals, cursing the ornamented fragments of stone which he turned up, to the detriment of his plough and his furrows. The walls of a small and elegantly-shaped little Greek temple, by the help of some of the half columns still remaining erect, was turned into a very satisfactory cattle-pen. Three beautifully carved Corinthian capitals, placed on their broadest sides, made very good stepping-stones across the brook; and a Circassian—not a New Zealander—was contemplating the havoc from the ruins of a bridge. In fact, it seemed as if these barbarians, unable to satisfy their vengeance upon the civilisation of the present, had determined to wreak it upon that of the past. But who shall say that the present has earned from the future a better fate?

While I was thus moralising, and sketching the theatre from the door of the tent, it began to rain,

and a Circassian suggested that rather than trust to the doubtful shelter of the tent we should share the accommodation afforded by the theatre. There was something tempting in the proposal, and we at once accepted it; so he went to make the necessary arrangements with his family, while we sat upon the



THEATRE, RABBATH-AMMON.

lower row of seats and looked over the arena. Going in at one end of the *aditum* and coming out at the other, he shortly returned with the intelligence that the objections of the female part of the community to receiving us among them were insuperable. Perhaps, considering the want of air and light which must have reigned in that ancient passage, this was not altogether to be regretted, though we were de-

prived of the strange experience of occupying an old Roman theatre under such unique conditions; but he showed us the way to two commodious caves which had been recently vacated by some families, and here we decided to install ourselves, until, upon close inspection, we discovered that they had left a legacy in the shape of innumerable fleas, which hopped about with such activity that we forthwith followed their example, and made up our minds to save our skins and brave the elements.

The fact that a small colony of 150 Circassians were thus settled with their flocks and herds, and peaceably pursuing their agricultural avocations, surrounded by the Beni Atiyeh, the Adwan, the Beni Hassan, and other Arab tribes, was a valuable evidence that the problem of colonisation by a foreign element in this country, so far as Arabs are concerned, is by no means insoluble, if the colony has the goodwill and protection of the Turkish Government, and the settlers are prepared to let it be understood that they know how to defend themselves. Indeed I am convinced, from what I have seen of the Arabs, that the danger to be apprehended from them—at all events in the provinces of Jaulan, Ajlun, and the Belka—is very much exaggerated.

We had still a whole afternoon before us, which we determined, notwithstanding a drizzling rain, to devote to an examination of the ruins, which sur-

pass in interest any to be found in Palestine; for while those of Jerash, which are exclusively Roman, are in some respects more perfect and beautiful, those of Rabbath-Ammon cover a much larger area of ground, have been originally constructed on a far grander scale, are replete with infinitely more interesting associations, date from a much greater antiquity, and comprise the remains, still clearly to be detected, of at least three distinct periods of history and epochs of civilisation.

Here may be seen those massive blocks of rough-hewn stone which composed the foundations and lower portions of the original Ammonite fortress, and upon which were afterwards superimposed the erections of Grecian architects, when, in B.C. 285, the city was conquered and rebuilt by Ptolemy XI. (Philadelphus), king of Egypt, and called Philadelphia. It was taken from his grandson nearly seventy years afterwards by Antiochus the Great,—became for some centuries one of the most flourishing cities of the Peræa,—and the monuments of the Romans, the ruins of which are so abundant, and in many instances so perfect, replaced those which have preceded them. They in their turn were followed by structures in the Byzantine style; and the most complete of all the ruins is a basilica, dating back probably to the fourth or fifth century, when we hear of Ammon as the seat of a bishopric. It seems never to have been occupied either by the Saracens or

Turks, and consequently from the date of the Arab wars in the seventh century has remained a desolation and a wilderness. It has been reserved for the Circassians to be the first settled population, after an interval of more than a thousand years, to take possession of these crumbling remains of former greatness. It is marvellous that during all that time Ammon should have resisted all attempts permanently to change its name, and be known among the Arabs of the present day by the identical appellation it bore when we first heard of it, 1500 years before the Christian era, as being the repository of the great iron bedstead of Og the king of Bashan: "nine cubits was the length of it, and four cubits the breadth of it, after the cubit of man." According to the Moslem idea, however, this would have been far too small to contain a giant of Og's dimensions, for we are informed by Mohammed that he was alive before the Flood, and saved himself upon that occasion by wading (see Sale's Koran).

Ammon is perhaps more authentically connected with another antediluvian survivor in the person of Ham, the son of Noah; for we find that "Chedorlaomer, and the kings that were with him, smote the Rephaims at Ashteroth Karnaim, and the Zuzims at Ham." Now when the Israelites advanced through Moab on Ammon, we are told that "giants dwelt therein in old time, and the Ammonites call them Zamzummims." If, as seems extremely probable,

the Zamzummims were the same as the Zuzims, who were also giants, and dwelt near the Rephaim, who occupied the Hauran immediately to the north, then the original name of Ammon was Ham, and it might, without any strained conjecture, have been so named by Canaan, the son of Ham, who we know came into possession of all this region. This theory has been advanced by Ewald and others, and would make Ammon one of the first cities built after the Flood. Perhaps some of the identical caves in which we had wellnigh taken up our quarters for the night were originally occupied by Zamzummims, who were familiar, by hearsay, with the incidents of that great catastrophe. I think, however, that the name was more probably derived from Ammon, the son of Lot, to whom this district was especially given.

CHAPTER IX.

THE RUINS OF RABBATH-AMMON—THE CITADEL—AN ILL-CONDITIONED ZAPTIEH—DRIVEN BACK BY THE WEATHER TO SALT—ABOU JABR, A PROTESTANT SETTLER—EXPEDITION TO ARAK EL EMIR—WE LOSE OUR WAY—ELIAS DAOUD—THE RUINS OF ARAK EL EMIR—MAGNIFICENT COUNTRY.

FOR picturesqueness of situation, I know of no ruins to compare with Ammon. The most striking feature is the citadel, which formerly contained not merely the garrison but an upper town, and covered an extensive area. The lofty plateau upon which it was situated is triangular in shape: two sides are formed by the wadies Nuegis and Hadeidah, which diverge from the apex, where they are divided by a low neck, and thence separating fall into the valley of the Jabbok, which forms the base of the triangle, and contained the lower town.

Climbing up to the citadel we can trace the remains of the moat, and crossing it find ourselves in a maze of ruins. The massive walls—the lower parts of which still remain, and which, rising from the precipitous sides of the cliff, rendered any attempt at scaling impossible—were evidently Ammonite. As

I leant over them and looked sheer down about 300 feet into one wady, and 400 feet into the other, I did not wonder at its having occurred to King David that the leader of a forlorn - hope against these ramparts would meet with certain death, and consequently assigning the position to Uriah. The only possible point from which that officer could have advanced was at the apex where the low neck connects the citadel with the high plateau beyond, but even here he would have had to charge up an almost hopeless escarpment. This is confirmed by the account of Joab's messenger to David describing the incident, who says : " We were upon them even unto the entering of the gate. And the shooters shot from off the wall upon thy servants; and some of the king's servants be dead, and thy servant Uriah the Hittite is dead also" (2 Sam. xi. 23, 24). Portions of this colossal gateway, and the massive wall flanking it, at the point where the low neck joins the apex of the triangle, still remain to attest the truth of this narrative, and to identify the spot where Uriah met his fate. Joab afterwards took the lower city, which he called " the city of waters," indicating very probably that the Jabbok was dammed into a lake near the lower city, to which the conformation of the valley would lend itself; but that the citadel still remained, and was upon the point of being taken, doubtless because its water-supply was cut off, and the provisions, after a siege which must have lasted

nearly two years, had become exhausted. So David arrives to take part in the final capture of the citadel, and avenges their pertinacious resistance by putting "the people that were therein under saws, and under harrows of iron, and under axes of iron, and made them pass through the brick-kiln" (2 Sam. xii. 31).

The citadel in all probability contained a temple to Molech "the flame-god," who was the supreme object of Ammonite worship, to whom they offered up human sacrifices; and the brick-kiln here alluded to may be conjectured to have been literally the "burning-place of Molech," where sacrifices were offered, and the children of Ammon made their sons pass through the fire. Perhaps where the temple of Molech once stood the Romans reared that magnificent edifice, the ruins of which still remain to attest its grand proportions; it faces to the east, and was doubtless either dedicated, like that of Baalbec, to the sun or to Hercules. In either case, the religious idea was closely allied to that which is embodied in the worship of Baal and of Molech. The foundations of this temple were about eighty yards by forty, and its façade was composed of four colossal columns the pedestals of which are still standing, while the columns themselves, measuring about five feet in diameter, are prostrate at their base. Not far distant is what appears at first to be a square tower, but it is in reality a very perfect specimen of a Byzantine church, the external walls of

which measure about seventy-five feet each way, and are comparatively in good preservation. The carving and ornamentation inside are very beautiful, but three of the arches which formed recesses have been built up, leaving only one by which it may be entered.[1] Near it was a building which seems to have been a mosque; and there can be little doubt that, though we have no evidence of its ever having been permanently occupied by the Turks, the Arabs have from time immemorial made temporary habitations here, and had a place of worship. It is possible that the massive square tower may have been once a central keep, which was converted by the Byzantines into a church. The columns of another temple were still standing, and near them was an old tower still in a sufficiently good state of repair to be inhabited by a Circassian family. The citadel seems to have been largely dependent on the lower town for water, to judge by the accounts of its sieges; but there can be no doubt that numerous subterranean passages to the valley of the Jabbok existed—the calcareous nature of the rock offering peculiar facilities for excavations of this nature. One cistern which I measured roughly was eighty yards in circumference and about thirty feet

[1] Canon Tristram seems to have been the first to discover this interesting specimen of Byzantine architecture only a few years ago, but I am at a loss to understand how it can have escaped the observation of previous travellers.

deep; and I also saw the remains of a well. The view from the citadel was neither very extensive nor interesting, beyond affording one a bird's-eye view of the ruins in the valley below; the rest of the landscape was so nearly on a level with the fortress that it was somewhat circumscribed. No trees were visible in any direction; and the rolling prairie, though affording good pasture, was bare-looking enough. The hillsides in every direction were honeycombed with caves, which in former days doubtless formed the dwelling-places of a very considerable population. Some of these under the citadel apparently extended for some distance, but we had neither the time nor the lights to enable us to explore them.

It would take days to do justice to the ruins of Ammon; notwithstanding the examination to which they have already been subjected, there can be little doubt that a little excavation would unearth interesting results; and that under the heaps of *débris* that strew the valley lie buried antiquarian treasures. The stream, now alive with fish, once evidently flowed between massive masonry embankments, and in places was covered over, for the single arch which now spans it has rather the appearance of having once formed a portion of this tunnel than of a bridge. Near it stand the lofty walls of the grand basilica, its arched entrance leading into a court, now grass-grown, where once the worshippers assembled.

We found when we returned to our tent the Sheikh Diab, who had accompanied us from Kalat Zerka, in close confabulation with old Suleiman, the impenitent zaptieh, who was evidently tampering with him, and undermining his principles. The result was soon apparent, for the sheikh came, and, with many apolo-



RABBATH-AMMON.

gies, excused himself from escorting us to Heshbon, on the ground that he was on bad terms with the sheikh of the Adwan, who were encamped there. We asked him why this had not occurred to him before his conversation with Suleiman,—as when he had volunteered to be our escort he knew perfectly well that the Adwan were at Heshbon. As he was unable to explain his conduct satisfactorily we dismissed him ignominiously, without a *baksheesh*, and determined to go to Heshbon without him, keeping

the lamb which he had presented to us as a forfeit for his misconduct. We also decided on sending the old zaptieh back to Salt with a letter detailing to the Caimakam our grievances against him, and going on with the younger one. The sheikh of the Adwan Arabs is a somewhat notorious character, by name Sheikh Goblan, celebrated for the extortionate manner in which he black-mails travellers,—for it is under his escort that the journey to Jerash and Ammon is always made,—and he has had enough to do with tourists to understand the art of fleecing them. However, we flattered ourselves that we equally well understood the art of refusing to be thus plundered, especially with a company of troops within a few hours' distance; still, as we were probably the first travellers who had ever explored these regions without having paid a farthing either to him or any other Arab sheikh, the precedent was not one likely to make him receive us very amicably.

While sitting at the door of our tent, surrounded by Circassians, two Arabs arrived with a couple of camels, each bearing a millstone. They were on their way to Heshbon from the Lejah, where the people make a special trade of millstones, the irregular surface of the basaltic trap, of which the whole region is composed, being peculiarly adapted to the purpose. They were evidently inspired with a wholesome dread of the Circassians, and seeing us on such good terms with them, encamped unpleas-

antly near us for protection; though if there is a difficult thing for one man to steal from another I should have said it was a millstone, so large that a camel could barely stagger under it. It is an evidence of comparative civilisation that Arabs should want millstones; but I afterwards met a Christian peasant from Palestine who made a very good livelihood by going about grinding corn for the Arabs. The only permanent erections in the country, and they are few and far between, are occasional mills, each consisting of one very small room, and a very big overshot wheel. There were three or four close to Salt, and I had seen one near Gadara; the Adwan have one near Heshbon, and there are two or three more between that place and Kerak.

We had dined off Sheikh Diab's lamb, and were just composing ourselves to sleep, when the rain, which had been threatening all day, came down in torrents. Our tent soon became a shower-bath, as it was only adapted as a shade from the sun; and we put up our umbrellas inside it in the vain attempt to keep our beds dry, as these were spread on the ground, and occupied the entire limited area of the tent floor. Our efforts were perfectly futile: the water soaked in all round below, and collected in the hollow of the canvas above, which formed a sort of reservoir, requiring every few minutes to be emptied from within by a poke upwards with a stick, when it rushed in a cascade over the tent-side. Our servants

were crowded together outside, under a waterproof sheet, and I do not think suffered so much as we did. We now regretted that we had not chosen the alternative of the fleas, and seriously considered the expediency of trying to make for a cave; but the night was pitch-dark—the nearest cave was half-way up a cliff, and about a quarter of a mile off, and even if we could find our way to it, we should be wet through by the time we got there. Moreover, it was impossible, under the circumstances, to pack up and carry our bedding without its becoming even more soaked in the process than it already was; so we put on our waterproofs, squatted under our umbrellas, and listened to the occasional grunt of the camels with the millstones in close proximity, who seemed as much disgusted with the state of things as we were.

When day broke the weather was as bad as it was possible to be. The heavy rain was being driven by a bitterly cold wind down the valley, and there was not a break in the clouds to indicate a possible change for the better. The zaptiehs were triumphant; they had predicted a week's rain, and their prediction was likely to be verified. The spring equinox had burst upon us prematurely, and it was useless to think of visiting Arab encampments, and living with nomads in their tents, under these circumstances. All tents are disagreeable in bad weather; but an Arab tent, with one side partially

open, through which the rain drives, and with vermin of all sorts seeking shelter from the wet next one's skin, is the most disagreeable of all.

From our present position Heshbon lay about sixteen miles off to the south-west, while Salt was the same distance to the north-west. Thither we decided to return with all speed, making our visit to Heshbon, if possible, the object of another expedition; so, leaving servants and baggage to come on as fast as they could with Suleiman, we started off at a gallop, under the guidance of the youngest zaptieh. Our way led across undulating plains, waving with luxuriant herbage: here and there we came across wheat-fields planted by the Arabs. Once or twice we passed heaps of stones which indicated the site of a ruined village: one of these was Jubeihat, the ancient Jogbehah; and another, Fuheis. Then we came into wooded wadies, where they begin to break the high plateau, and form gorges which descend to the valley of the Jordan, just above the Dead Sea. We could see little of the country, for the rain was pelting in our faces. The wind sweeping over these elevated plains was bitterly cold, and the weather was altogether much more like what one would expect in the Highlands of Scotland in November than on the plains of Moab in April—for we were now on the northern verge of that country. From here southwards those plains extended from which the Moabites drove the giant

race that occupied them in primitive times, thus coming into possession of one of the richest and most fertile plateaux in the world, and which stretched from the border of Gilead for about fifty miles southwards. From the northern and finest section of this region, usually called, *par excellence*, "the land of Moab," they were driven out by the Amorites, and their northern frontier then became the Arnon, while their more circumscribed area, the home of Ruth, seems to have been known as the "field of Moab." The Reubenites took possession of the "land of Moab" to the north of the Arnon: this is the land which is now included in the modern Belka, and which affords, without doubt, the finest territory for agricultural and pastoral purposes in the whole of Palestine, while it is the only province where there are no legal occupiers of the soil, and no settled population.

The country became more broken and hilly as we approached Salt; and about an hour before arriving at that town we joined the road by which we had left it two days before, and making a steep descent into the Wady Shaib, we reached it, dripping wet, about mid-day.

We were storm-stayed several days in Salt, and congratulated ourselves upon being in the comfortable house of Mr Halil instead of under the goat-hair tents of Sheikh Goblan. We now heard, however, for the first time, of a settler in Moab whom

we much regretted we knew nothing of when we were at Ammon. This is a Protestant Syrian, by name Abou Jabr, who has got a farm about two hours' distant from Ammon, in a southerly direction. This man farms about sixty *feddans*—in other words, an area of land which sixty yoke of oxen could plough in a day—for which he pays the Government an amount equivalent to £20 sterling a-year as his tithe. He has no title-deeds or other proof of legal possession, but seems to take as much land as he likes, securing himself from aggression from the Arabs by payment of a certain proportion of his crops, they acting the part of landlord, and reserving to themselves the right of quartering themselves upon him *ad libitum*. He stores his grain away in the large underground vaults which were used for the same purpose in ages gone by, and either sells it at Jerusalem, transporting it there himself on his own camels, or to travelling merchants, who come and buy it of him. His agricultural operations are already so successful that he is enabled yearly largely to increase his property, and in spite of the exactions of the Arabs he has succeeded in accumulating great wealth. He employs as labourers *fellahin* or peasants from Western Palestine, to whom he gives one-fourth of his crop in return for their labours. I saw this man's children, who were at school at Salt; and had we known of his existence when at Ammon, we should have undoubtedly taken refuge with him instead of

going to the Adwan or coming back to Salt, as the amount of information which must have been supplied by his practical experience would have been in the highest degree valuable and interesting, and with him we should have been relieved of the great difficulty attending our visit to Arabs of procuring grain for our horses.

That he should have been able to build himself a house, and live in it unmolested, in the heart of the Beni Sukhr Arabs, and distant a day's journey from Salt, is an evidence of the rapid strides which this country is making towards order and good government. And there can be little doubt that an experiment which has proved so successful, might be repeated on a larger scale, with equally favourable results. Excepting the inhabitants of the town of Salt, Abou Jabr is the only man who lives in a house in the whole province of the Belka. The fact that he is a permanent resident, and not a nomad, involves his paying tithes on his crops. The Arabs, although they cultivate the land, pay nothing on their crops, and the Government loses therefore the entire revenue it would derive from this source if there were a settled population.

One day we determined, in spite of the wet, to make a dash for the ruins of Arak el Emir, and return to Salt the same night. Arak el Emir lies due south of Salt, and we should therefore see entirely new country, and a ruin which possesses exceptional interest from the fact that it is purely Jewish in

its origin. Suleiman, the zaptieh, to whom we had refused the usual *baksheesh*, while we liberally rewarded his colleague, had excited a strong spirit of opposition against us among the zaptiehs; and although one was ordered by the Caimakam to place himself at our disposal, it was evident that he did so with a predetermination to make himself as disagreeable as possible. Even the promise of abundant remuneration in case of good behaviour failed to produce it, and there was manifestly a strong objection on the part of the whole corps to accompany us anywhere. This may possibly have arisen from the fact that it would make them unpopular with the Arabs to be escorting travellers through their country, thus depriving the sheikhs of the opportunity of levying black-mail. And as there is a thorough understanding usually between the zaptieh and the Arab, by which the former gets his share of the latter's plunder, the remuneration which we were likely to pay would not compensate for the possible loss which might be involved through a quarrel with an influential sheikh, when an opportunity occurred for arranging a scheme for defrauding the Government in the matter of taxes.

It seemed, moreover, that either the power or the inclination of the Caimakam to punish his police in case of misbehaviour was limited, as they laughed when we threatened them in this sense. So we had to make the best of it, as it was absolutely necessary

to have a guide, and it was certainly expedient that he should be a man in authority.

Our way lay down the Wady Shaib, and we passed the mills to which I have already alluded, and a large cave on the left-hand side, which had apparently been used as a place of worship, as there were a number of niches carved in the rock for lamps, and a recess in which the object of worship or shrine may have been placed. After descending for about an hour, I began to suspect that our zaptieh was playing us false, and did not intend to take us to Arak el Emir at all. It was raining hard, and he had been steadily impressing upon us the impossibility, in such weather, of getting to those ruins and back in one day; but from the information we had received at Salt, we felt satisfied it could be done; and after an examination of the map, I felt equally certain we were now going in a wrong direction. We therefore, on our own responsibility, turned off by a path to the left, and in spite of the remonstrances of our guide, who followed grumblingly in the rear, pressed up the steep hillside, and passing out of the Wady Shaib altogether, crossed into another most romantic gorge called the Wady Azrak, or Blue Valley, the sides of which were rocky and precipitous, but covered with fine timber wherever the trees could find holding ground. Our path wound round the head of this and again ascended until it reached a grassy wooded plateau, like a well-laid-out park,

when it disappeared, or rather became separated into a multitude of goat-tracks, leaving us utterly at a loss which to follow. To add to our difficulty a driving mist partially obscured the surrounding country, opening now and then so as to afford us most tantalising glimpses of its beauty and fertility, and then closing down upon us like a pall. The zaptieh was triumphant in his ignorance of the way, and we had to fall back upon our compass; but the country was too wooded, rocky, and precipitous to make a straight line possible. Suddenly we reached a magnificent spring bursting forth from beneath a sheer rock, above and around which were noble trees and glades of rich pasture. Here we determined to rest until the weather should clear a little, for it seemed impossible that a spot possessing such advantages should not attract to its vicinity shepherds or wanderers of some sort. Our guide, though he tried to sham ignorance, evidently knew where he was, and was surprised into asking me how I knew the way, and whether I had ever been here before. Just then I heard the tinkle of a bell, and going a little way from the spring, came across an Arab watching some goats. This individual, who looked one of the wildest specimens of his race, as he loomed out of the fog in his scanty attire, cut short my imperfect attempt to explain in Arabic where I wanted to go, by blandly remarking, with a most engaging smile, "Dove volete andare, caro mio!"

If he had knocked me down I should have felt infinitely less surprised than to hear myself thus addressed in excellent Italian by a Bedouin shepherd in the wilds of Gilead. This mysterious personage now politely offered to conduct us to some tents, which had been concealed by the fog, a few yards off, and which were pitched amid the ruins of an ancient village. Our sudden and unexpected arrival seemed rather to startle the women, children, and dogs. But the men, of whom there were six or eight grouped round a wood-fire, received us hospitably, and immediately proceeded to make some coffee for us. They told us we were on the shortest but not the usual road from Salt to Arak el Emir, but that in such thick weather it was extremely improbable we should find it without a guide; and after a whispered consultation with his friends, my new-made acquaintance offered to act in that capacity. They said that there was a large encampment of Abad Arabs in the immediate neighbourhood, but that they themselves were not nomads, but people from Salt watching their flocks, and that among them were some Christians. Our new guide seemed anxious to impress upon us that he himself was a Roman Catholic, and engaged in teaching the children. He subsequently said that he was only temporarily in the camp collecting a bad debt. In fact his account of himself was not altogether consistent, and there was something puzzling about the whole

party, who in outward appearance could in no way be distinguished from the ordinary Bedouin by the uninitiated eye.

However, we were only too glad to be helped out of our dilemma by having come across them, whoever they might be; and after spending half an hour with them, during which it cleared a little, we started with our guide, who told us his name was Elias Daoud. The ruined village and spring were called Ain Mahis.

Our way led through scenery more lovely, if possible, than that which we had already traversed. Indeed the ride from Ain Mahis to Arak el Emir was more beautiful than anything we had yet seen in Gilead, though from the first the scenery of the country generally had so far surpassed our expectations that we ceased to be surprised at anything. Except where now and then a gorge commenced, where the combination of rock and wood was most picturesque, and where the ground was carpeted with anemones, cyclamens, asphodels, iris, and many flowering shrubs, we rode knee-deep through the long, rich, sweet grass, abundantly studded with noble oak and terebinth trees. Here and there the Arabs had planted an acre or so of wheat or barley which invariably promised a heavy crop; it was now a foot or more high. At last, after winding down a long verdant glade, we entered by an easy descent the amphitheatre, in the midst of which the ruins are situated.

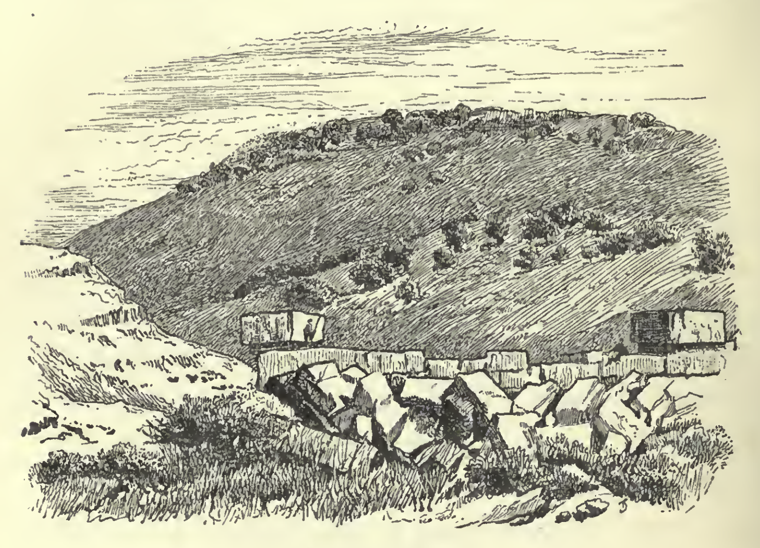
From the nature of the ground it seemed impossible that they could at any time have been occupied by a large population, as the area of the two terraces on which they are situated is too limited. The wood ceases just as we enter the valley, and all round the ruins themselves was an irrigated cornfield. They were somewhat disappointing at first sight, consisting only of a portion of the wall of the fortress, composed of blocks of stone of Cyclopean dimensions. It was built on the verge of a steep hill which abruptly, almost precipitously, descended to the Wady Seir, where the stream flowed between a fringe of trees. The blocks themselves were twenty feet in length and from three to four in breadth and height. An amphitheatre of cliffs, extensively excavated into spacious apartments, stables, and storehouses, rose abruptly from the rear of the terrace; but it was raining so much, and we had so little time at our disposal, that we were unable to examine them. An artificial road, 500 or 600 yards long, and flanked by large blocks of stone, formerly probably a parapet, leads from the principal terrace, on which are the massive remains I have described, to the Kasr el Abd, or Castle of the Slave, which is approached by a causeway across the remains of a moat, and was entered by a gateway built of massive blocks of stone. Only a portion of the wall is standing, but fragments of the columns which formed the colonnade in front are strewn

around, and the traces of the huge carved animals mentioned by Josephus are still to be seen—indeed the Jewish historian's description is most accurate. He says: "Hyrcanus erected a strong castle, and built it entirely of white stone to the very roof, and had animals of a prodigious magnitude engraved upon it. He also drew around it a great and deep canal of water. He also made caves of many furlongs in length, by hollowing a rock that was over against him; and then he made large rooms in it, some for feasting, and some for sleeping and living in. He introduced also a vast quantity of waters, which ran along it, and which were very delightful and ornamental in the court. But still he made the entrances at the mouths of the caves so narrow that no more than one person could enter by them at once. And the reason why he built them after that manner was a good one. It was for his own preservation, lest he should be besieged by his brethren, and run the hazard of being caught by them. Moreover, he built courts of greater magnitude than ordinary, which he adorned with vastly large gardens; and when he had brought the place to this state, he named it Tyre. This place is between Arabia and Judea, beyond Jordan, not far from the country of Heshbon." The Hyrcanus here alluded to lived about 180 B.C.; and De Saulcy, who has examined this interesting ruin more thoroughly than any other traveller, is of opinion that the castle was formerly an old

Ammonite temple, the materials of which Hyrcanus utilised, and decorated with columns which certainly partake of a comparatively late type of architecture, by no means in keeping with the Cyclopean stones. Mr Fergusson is indeed disposed to think that some portion of the structure must have been erected after Christ, and therefore not by Hyrcanus at all. However that may be, there can be no question that, from an archæological point of view, Arak el Emir is one of the most interesting ruins to the east of Jordan. We had no time in the pouring rain to do more than take a hurried and most tantalising glance at them, as a prolonged survey would have involved a night with some of Elias Daoud's very doubtful-looking friends in their most untempting and soaking wet tents. I made an imperfect sketch of a fragment of the wall in order to give some idea of the size of the stones; but I would refer the reader who desires to gain some idea of these curious ruins to De Saulcy's elaborate work. It is probable that a more thorough examination of the once inhabited cliffs in which Canon Tristram found a Hebrew inscription, would reward the explorer, and that excavations of the ruins of the public buildings on the high terrace above the palace would furnish rich results, and might possibly throw light upon an interesting and little-known period of Jewish history.

Arak el Emir is about 1500 feet above the level of the sea, and we had therefore made a

descent of upwards of 1200 feet from Salt. The valley in which it is situated debouches into the wide fertile Wady Kefren, and I surveyed it with interest as a possible line for a railway from the valley of the Jordan to the plateau of Moab. Immediately on the other side of the Wady Kefren is



ARAK EL EMIR.

the Wady Hesban at the head of which are situated the ruins of Heshbon, distant in a direct line south from Arak el Emir about eight miles. This latter ruin was the most southerly point I was destined to reach; and I looked wistfully towards Mount Nebo, not more than ten miles off, from the summit of which I had hoped to obtain a view over the plains of Moab as far south as the Arnon.

The weather had partially cleared, and our route

back, though longer, afforded us fine views over the broken country to the south, over the Dead Sea, nearly 3000 feet below us, and over the luxuriant Seisaban, that semi-tropical tract in the Jordan valley which lies between the mouth of the river and the mountains from which we were looking, and which has been fully described by Canon Tristram. We were skirting a small valley with our faces turned westward, and looking directly down upon Jericho, with the highlands upon which Jerusalem is situated beyond, and we were able to form a contrast between their barren aspect and the luxuriance of the vegetation amid which we were riding. Rounding a projecting spur we found ourselves once more approaching the Wady Shaib, and our zaptieh was triumphant. This was the route he said that he had intended from the first to bring us; and while we were glad he had not succeeded—for we had seen a most picturesque region by following our own devices—we allowed him the benefit of the doubt as to the sincerity of his intentions.

In the course of our ride I endeavoured to penetrate the mystery of our guide, Elias Daoud. He informed me that he was a native of Bethlehem, which I afterwards found to be untrue; that in early life he had determined to travel and see the world; that he had peddled sacred relics through Russia, had been the servant of an archbishop, and could read and chant the responses in Latin; that he had

accompanied the British expedition to Abyssinia, and he mentioned the names of several officers by whom he had been employed; that he had visited Paris, and he aired his French as evidence of the fact; that he had been in Rome and Athens, and he showed me a Greek passport to prove the truth of his assertion; that after his return to Palestine from Greece he had crossed the Jordan on some trading speculation; that here he had fallen in love with and married a Bedouin girl; that he had travelled with her all through these regions, residing for some time at Kerak, where he had officiated as a schoolmaster; that he was the owner of a mill, and at present made his livelihood by grinding corn for the Arabs; that his wife was living with her relatives at an encampment to which he intended to return after piloting us back to Salt; that he was tired of her and of the life he was leading; and finally, that he wished to return to civilisation in the capacity of my servant. As he spoke Turkish, Arabic, and Italian perfectly, and had a smattering of French, Russian, and Greek, and was thoroughly familiar with the various Arab tribes, and their leading characteristics, the proposal was a tempting one provided he could be trusted; so I gave him a qualified answer, and told him if he liked to be our guide to Jerusalem I should then determine whether I should engage him or not. When we got within a few miles of Salt he turned off to the encampment where he said his wife was expect-

ing him, and promised to meet us at the same spot the following morning and be our guide to Jericho; for we had reluctantly determined to curtail our trip, and return to regions where the value of bank-notes was known. The unusually high price of horse-feed, and the delay involved by so much wet weather, had reduced our finances to so low an ebb that it became absolutely necessary to replenish the exchequer; and a trip into Moab, except in the capacity of mendicants, was an impossibility. We had, however, become so fascinated by the country to the east of the Jordan, that we felt strongly inclined, circumstances permitting, to return to it after a visit to Jerusalem.

CHAPTER X.

FERTILITY OF GILEAD—ITS ARAB POPULATION—THE CISTERNS OF MOAB—INDUCEMENTS TO COLONISE MOAB AND GILEAD—THEIR VARIED PRODUCTIONS AND CLIMATE—THE LABOUR PROBLEM—TRANSPORT AND PROPOSED RAILWAY SYSTEM—A LAND OF PROMISE.

I HAD now seen enough of the land to the east of the Jordan to satisfy myself that it contained agricultural resources susceptible in the highest degree of development, and that the local conditions were peculiarly favourable to the introduction of immigrants, through whose capital and industry these fertile regions might once more be rendered vastly productive, and become a source of considerable revenue to the Turkish Government, and at the same time of profit to those who should decide to settle here and invest their money and labour. The popular impression of Palestine is derived from the observation of tourists in the country to the west of the Jordan, where the land is rocky and barren, and the few fertile spots which exist are already under cultivation by the resident population. Canon Tristram, in his 'Topography of the Holy Land' (p. 312), says truly: "No

one can fairly judge of Israel's heritage who has not seen the luxuriant exuberance of Gilead, as well as the hard rocks of Judea, which only yield their abundance to reward constant toil and care: to compare the two is to contrast nakedness and luxuriance." The fact that this rich and luxuriant country should be only sparsely inhabited by a wandering population, possessing no legal title whatever to the soil, specially adapts it to settlement by a fixed and permanent population who could be established here without injury to the Arabs; for regulations might easily be devised under which the interests of both could be safeguarded and secured. In point of fact, however, the Arabs have very little claim to our sympathy. They have laid waste this country, ruined its villages, and plundered its inhabitants, until it has been reduced to its present condition; and if they were driven back to the Arabian deserts from which they came, there is abundant pasture in its oases for their camels and goats. In Ajlun there are large tracts of fertile land which the Arabs have forced the peasants to abandon, but which they themselves rarely visit. The most respectable and sedentary tribe in that country, although they would not allow us to visit them, seem to be the Beni Hassan; but they are not numerous, and probably an arrangement could be come to with them by which certain lands which they have been accustomed to cultivate should be reserved to them. The most lawless, de-

structive, and powerful tribe who infest "the lands of Gilead and Moab," are the Beni Sukhr. They are invaders, who should be driven back across the Hadj road, where a small *cordon* of soldiers, posted in the forts which now exist upon it, would be sufficient to keep them in check. The Hamideh, Beni-Atiyeh, and Belka Arabs, occupying corners of the Belka, have been reduced by the Beni Sukhr to the position of tributary tribes, and cultivate their lands for them as *teba'a* or feudal subjects. They would rejoice at the expulsion of their masters, who have appropriated the lands which they had originally occupied; and they are so far sedentary and agricultural in their habits that they could be reduced to the condition of peaceable villagers without difficulty, and form a valuable labouring population, to be employed by immigrant capitalists. The Adwan would be more difficult to deal with, being lawless and predatory in their habits; but they are so entirely dependent upon the produce of the lands which they cultivate, that their good behaviour might be secured by reserving them possession of these. In fact, the same system might be pursued which we have adopted with success in Canada with our North American Indian tribes, who are confined to their "reserves," and live peaceably upon them in the midst of the settled agricultural population.

The Ajermeh Arabs cultivate the lands quite on the southern frontier of the Belka, bordering upon

Kerak, but the cultivation of all these nomads consists in scratching up the easiest and most fertile-looking patches once in every three or four years. To the south of the Belka lies Kerak, a most fertile province, in which there is only one town, of the same name, which is the residence of a Caimakam, who is at the same time the sheikh of the Arab population, and until lately retained his practical independence, refusing to be taxed, or to acknowledge the authority of the Government, except so far as it suited him. Within the last few months troops have been sent to Kerak, and the central power has made itself felt. Nothing, however, would tend so effectually and speedily to convert this unprofitable and lawless district into a thriving and peaceable community as the settlement and organisation, under special regulations, of the neighbouring provinces of the Belka and Ajlun. The resources of Kerak are totally undeveloped, but are quite equal to those of the other provinces; while the climate of the plateau on which the town stands, at an elevation of nearly 4000 feet above the level of the sea, would adapt it to European constitutions.

It is worthy of note that when I submitted a scheme for colonising this region to the Government at Constantinople, the difficulty of dealing with the Arabs was never once suggested as an objection, nor did the nomad population seem in the eyes of the Government to possess any prescriptive rights

which should interfere with the purchase of this country by immigrants. The fact that colonies of Circassians were being established at Kuneitereh and Rabbath-Ammon; that a few soldiers and an energetic Caimakam had cleared the province of Ajlun of the Beni Sukhr, and recovered the arrears of taxes from the most refractory of the local Arab sheikhs, as we could ourselves testify; that we had been able to visit Kalat Zerka, Rabbath-Ammon, and Arak el Emir without paying a farthing of black-mail; and that a Protestant farmer was already settled in security in the wildest part of the country, and making a large income out of land for which he had never paid, and for which he held no title,—afforded abundant evidence that the Arabs were becoming reduced to order, and that the Government could, if it chose, protect any settlers who should come to colonise the country under its auspices.

The region which I should propose for settlement, in the first instance, would be the entire district of the Belka, from the Arnon on the south, to the Jabbok on the north, extending eastwards as far as the Hadj road, or at all events to the limit of the good land, and, if necessary, including such portions of the province of Ajlun to the north of the Jabbok, as might be deemed the most desirable—making a tract of at least a million, or possibly a million and a half acres. The western boundary would be the Jordan and the western shore of the Dead Sea, thus

including that singular sheet of water within its limits. As I was prevented from extending my trip as far south as the Arnon, I will refer to the testimony of Canon Tristram as a proof that, in recommending the plains of Moab as well as the land of Gilead for settlement, I have good authority for dwelling upon their advantages. Indeed, the universal opinion of those familiar with them at Salt would have been sufficient evidence, were none other forthcoming, that for pastoral and agricultural purposes the tribe of Reuben occupied the most favoured region in Palestine. The whole of their territory was a vast alluvial deposit of the richest character, out of which rise the knolls and ridges on which the old cities stood, and which are to this day abundantly supplied with the reservoirs and cisterns which had been hewn in them in old time. "Had the country been without these excrescences of rock," says Canon Tristram, "affording unlimited facilities for cistern excavation, and for the storing of water-supplies, it is utterly impossible that it could ever have sustained as it has done a vast resident and agricultural population. With them there is nothing requisite beyond a settled government, and the reparation of the old cisterns and conduits, to enable a population as dense as of old to resume the occupation of these alluvial plains." [1]

For particulars of these reservoirs, I must refer the reader to Canon Tristram's book, merely calling at-

[1] Land of Moab, p. 197.

tention to the fact that at Um Rasas he found three large ones — one measuring 30 yards by 18, and very deep, two containing water, and all more or less in good repair; at M'Seitbah, one 30 yards by 14, with plenty of water at the bottom, 30 feet below the surface. Describing the view from which, he says, —"Not a bit of desert or barren land was visible in this grand panorama, and the camels, sheep, and goats marked the whole sweep of the glass with patches." At Ziza he found "an immense tank of solid masonry measuring 140 yards by 110, with water 17 feet 6 inches from the rim, and the construction quite perfect." At Medeba is another tank quite perfect, 120 yards square; and he goes on to say, "Everywhere is some artificial means of retaining the occasional supplies of rain-water." The soil of all Moab he describes "as wonderfully rich, — a fine red sandy loam, which year after year grows successive crops of wheat without manure, and into which one can with ease thrust a stick for at least two feet." I could quote many other passages to the same effect, but the above will suffice to show that this fine country is only waiting the judicious application of capital and enterprise to be restored to its former condition.

Notwithstanding all these advantages, the charms of Gilead to the north of the Jabbok are superior in my eyes to the plains here described, while the country is far more free from Arabs and law-abiding. The objection to including the whole of Ajlun as far

north as the Yarmuk within the limits of the colony in the first instance, lies in the fact that a large portion of it is still village property, held under *tapoo* papers, whereas not an acre is so held in the Belka; and it would be necessary, therefore, for a land company undertaking the resettling of the country, to purchase it by private sale. The Belka being all Crown property, can be disposed of by the Government *en bloc* without infringing upon any private rights, excepting possibly at the town of Salt, which, with the cultivated land surrounding it, should be dealt with separately. There can be no doubt that if the Belka became the property of a land company formed under the sanction of the Turkish Government, with a charter for a bank enabling it to lend money on mortgage to the villagers at a reasonable rate, instead of at the usurious percentage at present charged by money-lenders who now virtually hold the peasantry in bondage by liens on their crops, the whole country would soon become more or less dependent on the colonial administration, which could thus gradually and beneficially extend the sphere of its operations, at the same time that they could be rendered pecuniarily highly profitable.

Perhaps the difference in the luxuriance of the vegetation between Eastern and Western Palestine is brought into the most striking contrast on the Dead Sea itself. Nothing can be more barren or uninviting than the rugged waterless mountains on

its western shore, while the wadies opposite teem with an almost tropical vegetation. Here are palms in profusion, and jungles of terebinths, wild almond and fig trees, poplars, willows, hawthorn, and oleanders covering the steep hillsides and fringing the streams of such picturesque ravines as those in which are situated the fountains of Callirrhoe and the wells of Moses. In the spring especially, these glens, adorned with a rich semi-tropical flora, are in their full beauty. There can be little doubt that the celebrated healing qualities of the hot springs of Callirrhoe, and the romantic scenery by which they are surrounded, would render them a popular resort for tourists and health-seekers, if ever this country should be reclaimed, and proper accommodation for travellers and visitors was provided. Included within the territory which I should propose for colonisation, would be the Ghor Seisaban, or plains of Shittim, which Canon Tristram describes as "by far the most extensive and luxuriant of any of the fertile lands bordering on the Dead Sea." "This abundantly-watered and tree-covered district," he continues, "extends six miles from east to west, and ten or twelve from north to south." I crossed it myself at its northern extremity, and rode through an extensive tract of young wheat-fields, cultivated by the Adwan.

A few Ghawarini Arabs and other marauders at present haunt the tamarisk and acacia thickets of

this region, but there would be no difficulty in clearing them out. Nearly 1300 feet below the level of the sea, this plain is never visited by frost, and its winter climate is even more temperate than that of Egypt, while its intense summer heats adapt it to the cultivation of tropical productions. The average minimum of the thermometer registered by Canon Tristram in the fifteen days between the 30th December to 13th January was 53° 5′ at 10 P.M., and 43° the average minimum during the night; whilst during the day it ranged as high as 85°, averaging 72°, "with a radiancy of atmosphere that converted the eastern mountains of Moab and the Dead Sea into a fairy land of glowing softness." That this Jordan valley district is capable of maintaining a large population may be gathered from the fact that it was selected by Lot, when he parted from Abraham, because "it was well watered everywhere, even as the garden of the Lord; like the land of Egypt, as thou comest unto Zoar." And accordingly, on this plain of Shittim, sprang up the four "cities of the plain," of which two were Sodom and Gomorrah. For it has been established, I think beyond a doubt, both by Canon Tristram and Mr Grove, that the site popularly given to Sodom and Gomorrah on the south-eastern shores of the Dead Sea is erroneous, and that the real position of those cities was in the rich and fertile Ghor Seisaban.

Ascending from the fervid subtropical valley of

the Jordan, we gradually, before reaching the plains of Moab and highlands of Gilead, pass through another zone of vegetation, until we finally attain an elevation of about 4000 feet above the level of the sea, and more than 5000 feet above the Ghor Seisaban; but the difference in feet does not really convey an adequate notion of the difference in climate, owing to the peculiar conditions of the Jordan valley, which, being depressed below the level of the sea, produces a contrast in vegetation with the mountains of Gilead corresponding rather to a difference of 10,000 feet than of only half that elevation. The consequence is, that in no part of the world could so great a variety of agricultural produce be obtained compressed within so limited a space. The valley of the Jordan would act as an enormous hothouse for the new colony. Here might be cultivated palms, cotton, indigo, sugar, rice, sorghum, besides bananas, pine-apples, yams, sweet potatoes, and other field and garden produce. Rising a little higher, the country is adapted to tobacco, maize, castor-oil, millet, flax, sesamum, melons, gourds, cumin, coriander, anise, ochra, brinjals, pomegranates, oranges, figs,—and so up to the plains, where wheat, barley, beans and lentils of various sorts, with olives and vines, would form the staple products. Gilead especially is essentially a country of wine and oil; it is also admirably adapted to silk-culture; while among its forests, carob or

locust-bean, pistachio, jujube, almond, balsam, kali, and other profitable trees grow wild in great profusion. All the fruits of Southern Europe, such as apricots, peaches, and plums, here grow to perfection ; apples, pears, quinces, thrive well on the more extreme elevation, upon which the fruits and vegetables of England might be cultivated,—while the quick-growing Eucalyptus could be planted with advantage on the fertile but treeless plains. Not only does the extraordinary variety of soil and climate thus compressed into a small area offer exceptional advantages from an agricultural point of view, but the inclusion of the Dead Sea within its limits would furnish a vast source of wealth, by the *exploitation* of its chemical and mineral deposits. The supply of chlorate of potassium, 200,000 tons of which are annually consumed in England, is practically inexhaustible ;[1] while petroleum, bitumen, and other lignites can be procured in great quantities upon its shores. There can be little doubt, in fact, that the Dead Sea is a mine of unexplored wealth, which only needs the application of capital and enterprise to make it a most lucrative property.

The two great desiderata for the development of the agricultural and mineral productions of the tract of country which I propose for colonisation are, abundance and cheapness of labour, and facilities of

[1] A concession was once obtained by a French company for the *exploitation* of the Dead Sea, but it has since lapsed.

transport to the sea-coast. In regard to the first, labour might be obtained from four sources. First, from the sedentary Arab tribes, who have hitherto cultivated the land for the Beni Sukhr, and who would readily undertake the same service for the more favourable conditions which they would obtain from emigrant farmers and capitalists ; secondly, from the *fellahin* of Palestine to the east of the Jordan, who would flock over in numbers to obtain employment, where they would live under the protection of a just and lenient Government. As it is, Abou Jabr, to whom I have already alluded, finds no difficulty in obtaining as much *fellahin* labour as he requires. Peasants could reach the colony in one, two, or at most three days' journey from any part of Palestine. Those who have had the most experience of this class of the population speak in the highest terms of their capacity for agricultural purposes. Mrs Finn, in a paper recently published by the Palestine Exploration Fund, says : " The *fellah* is capable of much good service, whether as a soldier, a cultivator, or a builder : we found that they made excellent agricultural labourers and builders ;" and Captain Warren has spoken very highly of the *fellahin* who worked under his staff of English engineers in sinking shafts, driving galleries, and all the other arduous work connected with his excavations in Jerusalem. Lieut. Conder, R.E., late on the Palestine Exploration service, in a very interest-

ing series of articles which he contributed not long since to the 'Jewish Chronicle,' warmly advocates the establishment of a Jewish colony in Palestine, and the employment of *fellahin* labour. As his duties did not lead him to the east of the Jordan, he has not had an opportunity of contrasting the incontestably superior advantages which that region holds out to the high lands proposed by him at the back of Mount Carmel. I afterwards visited that neighbourhood, and found that there was too large a settled population, and too little waste land lying together to be available for colonisation under a special district administration. But even of Western Palestine, where both soil and climate are far inferior to Gilead and Moab, he says: "The hills might be covered with vines and the valleys run with oil, the plains might be yellow with corn and the harbours full of ships, but for the greedy pasha and unjust judge." The true principle of colonisation to be wrought out, he goes on to say, "is not that of superseding native labour, but of employing it under educated supervision. The peasantry are an energetic and very stalwart race, with immense powers of endurance, seasoned to the climate, temperate, good-natured, and docile. They are accustomed to obey their chiefs and elders, and when they see any prospect of fair play and just taxation, they can be made to work very hard, as has been proved in more than one instance. They are a

people capable of great improvement, their faults are those of an oppressed race, and their natural quickness and power of adaptation would render it easy to accustom them to European improved methods of agriculture, if gradually introduced, and not forced upon them." Mr Conder further remarks: "In dealing with the *fellahin*, Jewish settlers would have one great advantage, they would probably learn the language easily; for the present dialect is very close to the Aramaic or Chaldean, which we know was spoken as late as the fourth century in Palestine, and which is called in the Talmud the language of the ignorant." Besides the *fellahin* agriculturist, it might be found possible to combine charity with economy by the importation of refugee labour. An excellent class of emigrants could be obtained from among the destitute exiles from Bulgaria and Roumelia, who have proved comparatively skilled and thrifty farmers in their former homes, and who would probably bring a greater degree of intelligence and experience to bear upon their operations than the peasant of Palestine. Finally, it is probable that some of the more wealthy Jewish proprietors would endeavour to encourage a spirit of agricultural industry among the needy of their own race, and that by degrees poor Hebrew emigrants might be trained to labour upon the soil, as they have already done in the agricultural colonies in Russia, and as they do now in some part of Africa. The proprietor might either pay his labourers by

allowing them a share in his crops—a plan which is extensively practised throughout Palestine and Syria—or he might pay them in money. The Rev. Mr Neil, a Protestant clergyman, formerly resident in Jerusalem, gives it as his experience, after some years' observation, that farming even to the west of the Jordan is an extremely profitable occupation; and my own observation of some extensive farming operations in the plain of Esdraelon, to which I shall allude later, fully confirms his opinion. He gives the price of labour at from 5s. to 6s. a-week for men, 3s. a-week for women, and 2s. a-week for girls. The farm-implements are of the rudest and most primitive description,—a light wooden plough, which one man could carry easily, and which can be drawn by a single ox, will turn over the rich soil sufficiently to produce good crops. I often met ploughmen, each with his plough on his shoulder, returning from their day's work. There can be no doubt, however, that improved farm-implements will result in heavier crops, and that with regular cultivation, manuring and top-dressing, which are now absolutely unknown, would become necessary. Farm-stock generally are cheap on the west of the Jordan. Horses cost from £8 to £10; mules from £12 to £15; camels, £20 to £30; asses, £3 to £6; oxen from £8 to £15; full-grown sheep from 10s. to 16s., and goats still less. To the east of the Jordan the prices rule even lower. Stock-food consists principally of barley and

chopped straw, and four horses may be kept at an annual cost of from £30 to £40. Besides chopped straw, which forms the principal forage of cattle, oil-cake made from the pressed *sesame* is abundant,—indeed, *sesame* oil is a large product of the country.

As there is never any rain between "the early" and "the later rains," or between May and October, there is no necessity for stacking the crops, and they are thrashed and winnowed on the open floors, which are a marked feature in the country. Hence farm-buildings are not required, except for the purpose of housing cattle and storing away the crops. In the former case, the weather is so mild that open sheds suffice; while for granaries, natural caves and excavations are largely used. Hedging, ditching, draining, &c., are unknown. Even on the unirrigated lands the crops are sometimes very heavy; but good land, well irrigated, will bear as many as four crops a-year. To the east of the Jordan the land is so much richer, and the price, both of stock and food so much lower, that we were informed that Abou Jabr, on the only farm of any size which exists, was accumulating a large fortune, notwithstanding the fact of his having to pay a heavy black-mail to the Arabs, and to transport his produce on the backs of camels a considerable distance to market.

In the event of the plains of Moab and land of Gilead being taken up for settlement, the western section of the colony would be within an easy

day's journey from Jerusalem, from which city in the early stages of its development supplies and necessaries could be drawn; but the true outlet for its produce would be the port of Haifa, situated under Mount Carmel. From here a railway might be constructed to Tiberias, with a branch to Damascus, as I already proposed, while the line to the colony would then follow the valley of the Jordan to the northern shore of the Dead Sea. The distance from the port of Haifa to the northern limit of the colony at the mouth of the Jabbok, by way of Beisan, would be about sixty miles, and by way of Tiberias, twelve or fourteen miles more. Both routes are entirely free from any engineering difficulties, the line following an almost imperceptible incline the whole way. It would then pass for twenty-five miles through the lands of the colony and the plain of the Seisaban to the north-east angle of the Dead Sea. The ascent from here to the highlands of Moab would be a serious operation, and would probably not be undertaken until such an extension was justified by the prosperity of the colony; but in the meantime the produce could be brought down in less than a day from almost any part of the highland tract proposed for settlement to the terminus of the railway. It might also be deemed desirable, in the event of the Jaffa and Jerusalem railroad not being made by the French company, who obtained a concession for the purpose, to have a short branch or

tramway by way of Jericho to Jerusalem, this would put the colony in close and direct communication with Jerusalem, and bring the latter city to within five or six hours' distance of the port of Haifa by rail.

The railway system, of which this line would be the nucleus, might finally be extended, either by skirting the eastern shore of the Dead Sea, or ascending to the plateau of Moab, as might on examination be deemed most desirable, to Akaba on the Red Sea. Captain Burton, who is intimately acquainted with the gulf and port of Akaba, has already proposed it as the terminus of a railway. There are said to be large coal and iron deposits in the neighbourhood of Ma'an through which it would pass, and the country there is capable of development. The total length of the line from the Mediterranean to the Red Sea would be about 260 miles, of which the first 150 would pass through a rich populated country, and thus furnish an alternative route to India, far more economical and easy of construction than the Euphrates Valley route, and infinitely more likely to be remunerative from its local traffic; for Syria and Palestine would thus be placed in direct railway communication with their own port on the Red Sea, and the whole traffic of the East would be open to them; while it is probable that overland travellers from India would prefer this route to the one through Egypt with which they are now so familiar. One of the principal sources of revenue, however, would be obtained from Mecca pil-



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grims. Such a line, almost following the course of the Hadj road from Damascus to Akaba, would completely supersede it; and the thousands of travellers who are now annually conveyed under Government escort to and from Mecca—often exceeding 20,000 in one year, at a cost to the country of £80,000 annually—could be transported for a tithe of that sum, so far as the Government was concerned, by rail and steamer from Akaba to Jeddah, while the expenses of the journey by these means would prove far less to the pilgrims than by road. The present cost of the pilgrimage to a rich man travelling comfortably in a *takhtarawan*, averages about £400. The hire of a camel to Mecca and back from Damascus is £15; for a *takhtarawan*, £150; and for a simple litter, about £50. The pilgrims' private expenses, therefore, come to a large item, excluding the enormous charges incurred by the Government; and the latter could well afford to pay the railway a subsidy, which, in addition to the passage-money charged the pilgrims, would go far towards paying the entire expenses of the proposed line. Besides which, as I have already explained, the abolition of the Hadj on its present system is an absolutely essential measure if the Arab tribes to the east of the Jordan are ever to be reduced to order, and life and property rendered secure. It is needless to point out the advantages in particular which would accrue to the Gileadite colony, which would lie nearly midway between the two seas, and would thus benefit from the commerce

of both. A line of almost equal importance would remain to be constructed in order to complete the system. This would be a branch from the south-eastern point of the Dead Sea to Ismaila on the Suez Canal, a distance of about 220 miles, thus placing Syria and Egypt in direct railway communication,—a consummation much to be desired in the interest of both countries. The trade between Egypt and Syria is constantly increasing, but is crippled by the difficulty of transport from the interior to the coast. Egypt is now one of the largest and most profitable markets for Syrian produce, sheep and horses, fruits fresh and dry, and even cereals in years of scarcity find a ready sale there; while there can be no doubt that if travellers could "book" from Cairo by way of Jerusalem to Damascus, and pass from one of those highly populated oriental centres to the other in fifteen or sixteen hours, a large passenger as well as goods traffic would be speedily developed, all of which would pass through the whole length of the colony.

Such was the future which my sanguine imagination suggested might possibly be in store for the fertile and interesting regions which we had traversed. And on the eve of my departure from the Land of Gilead, I felt assured, that though I had failed to contemplate it from Mount Nebo, as I had hoped, I had nevertheless gazed from the highest peak in its mountains over a Land of Promise.

CHAPTER XI.

WE LEAVE GILEAD—ELIAS DAOUD—THE PLAIN OF SHITTIM—THE JORDAN IN FLOOD—JERICHO—ARRIVAL AT JERUSALEM—THE HOLY WEEK AND JEWISH PASSOVER—THE JEWISH COLONY OF THE TEMPLE—JIFNA—THE FAMILY OF ELIAS DAOUD—RAPACIOUS TAX-GATHERERS—OPPRESSION OF THE MOSLEM PEASANTRY.

We had been detained at Salt longer than we intended by the report that the Jordan was so swollen by the recent rains that the ferry was not plying. However, there seemed some uncertainty on the point, so we decided to risk it under the guidance of Elias Daoud, whom we preferred to a zaptieh, and who had promised to meet us just outside the town, which, for some reason best known to himself, he seemed to shrink from entering. This was a suspicious fact to which at the time we did not attach the importance it deserved. We were so disgusted with the escort of zaptiehs, that although the route was reported to be somewhat unsafe, on account of the Adwan and Ghawarini Arabs, and there is a regular and pretty high charge made for protection in the case of travellers journeying from

Jerusalem to Salt, we decided on taking our chance without any protection at all; and bidding adieu to our kind host, Mr. Halil, to whom we had been indebted for several days' hospitality, started for Jericho alone, and picked up Daoud about a mile out of the town, where he was waiting for us with his Arab wife. Considering that he was about to leave her, possibly for ever, I thought his parting with her, which consisted of a few hurried whispers, somewhat heartless. He probably consoled her with the assurance that he would soon return; but he immediately afterwards announced to me his ardent desire to be allowed to follow me to the end of the world, and to act in the combined capacity of son and servant for the rest of his life. There was something so extremely captivating and intelligent in the manner of this scamp, and he was so full of interesting information of all sorts, that I confess I shut my mind wilfully against the suspicions that kept cropping up in it. He rattled on with descriptions of his adventures in various parts of the world, with interesting anecdotes of Arab life in its wildest form; and, above all, professed that he was a far safer guide than any zaptieh, because he was an intimate friend of the Adwan sheikh near whose camp we should pass, and who was not a man to be deterred from robbing a traveller by the presence of a zaptieh. As the total amount of our worldly wealth at this moment amounted to twelve shillings

and sixpence, and our luggage consisted of a single change of raiment, together with cooking utensils, bedding, &c., we felt tolerably secure against robbers, unless they should capture us for a ransom—an act of daring upon which the Adwan would not venture, as they are too dependent upon the lands which they cultivate, and occupying country between Salt and Jerusalem, are within easy reach of both. So we jogged down the romantic gorge of the Shaib in a very contented frame of mind, delighted with the picturesqueness of the scenery, and the agreeable change in the weather, which had now cleared. The vegetation was fresh and luxuriant after the rain, while the swollen torrent dashed down between a thick fringe of oleanders to the valley of the Jordan. We passed the tomb of a Moslem saint, where goods and valuables deposited by travelling Arabs are considered sacred. Here, according to Elias Daoud, an Arab might leave the valuable plunder which he had just obtained from the British tourist, and go off himself into hiding. It was secure against appropriation by his fellows, and at the end of weeks or months he might return and find it as he had left it. I have only the word of our voluble guide for this story, who probably spoke from his own experience.

Meantime the temperature was changing rapidly, and when about mid-day we reached the Seisaban, it was blazing hot. Here Elias looked anxiously

round for the Adwan camp, and I confess I did the same. I think there was a shade of disappointment on his face when he found they had moved. I since have had reason to believe that his one object was to find an Arab camp, whether Ghawarini or Adwan, with whom to divide the little that we possessed. Fortunately not a tent or human being was visible. The whole country was irrigated by the waters of the Shaib, and all round its debouchure into the plain were waving fields of young grain, the soil showing every sign of fertility. From here to the Dead Sea it extends in a broad, level, unbroken tract covered with a dense thicket, chiefly of tamarisk and acacia, though other larger trees are scattered about. The whole of this rich plain of Shittim is only waiting for capital and labour to be converted into one of the richest and most productive regions to be found anywhere. We made our mid-day halt in a small ravine by which what remained of the Shaib, here called the Nimrim, was meandering to the Jordan; these were in fact the waters of Nimrim, of which the prophet says, — "For the waters of Nimrim shall be desolate: for the hay is withered away, the grass faileth, there is no green thing." Doubtless, as contrasted with what these plains once were, the prophet's description is even now accurate; but the amount of green we had been traversing, proved how easily the rest of the plain might be restored to its ancient fertility. On a low hill, a

little to the left, were the ruins of Beth-Nimrah, originally a city of the Amorites, and one of the frontier towns of Gad; but we had no time to visit them, and pushed on somewhat anxiously to the Jordan, as in the event of a crossing being impossible, we had nothing to look forward to but a night in the open air on its banks, with a very short allowance of food, and a considerable risk of predatory nocturnal visitors.

Scrambling through the dense thicket which fringes the river, we found it boiling down in a turbid yellow flood, but were relieved to find that our call brought forth a ready response from the ferrymen on the other side, and that they showed no hesitation in manning the ferry-boat. Notwithstanding considerable difficulty in embarking and disembarking our loaded animals, one of whom fell back into the river, we were soon all safe on the other side, and made a most futile attempt to bathe in a backwater of mud, for the torrent was too fierce to admit of our venturing out into the stream. Then we pressed on up the steep slippery slope on the right bank, and rapidly traversing the intervening plain, arrived a little before sunset at Jericho.

Here we once more came in contact with the signs and evidences of civilisation. A party of Americans, with the star-spangled banner floating over their tents, were encamped above the Ain es Sultan; and some tourists, under the escort of a

swaggering young Arab sheikh from Jerusalem, had pitched their tent in the back garden of the modest hostelry in which we sought accommodation.

The dragoman of the American party was as much amazed to see two unprotected travellers turn up from the eastern side of the Jordan, independent of all guidance by one of his class, as the young sheikh was to observe the absence of any Arab escort. It was a bad precedent for both. When travellers take to exploring the wilds of Arabia without either dragoman or Arab sheikhs to take care of them, the trade of these gentlemen, who now usually divide the black-mail and other plunder between them, will be gone. So the young sheikh asked us under whose protection we had come from Salt; to which we replied "Our own." As he and his family had the monopoly of protecting and escorting travellers between Jerusalem and Jericho, he further wished to know under whose protection we intended to proceed to the former city; to which we also replied, "Our own" — on which we looked very fixedly at each other for a few moments; but nothing further apparently occurring to him to say, he resigned himself to the inevitable—evidently with a gloomy foreboding that the palmy days of his occupation were drawing to a close.

Meantime Elias Daoud took advantage of the opportunity to illustrate the insecurity of the situation, by surreptitiously appropriating a strap; at

least we had good reason to assume later that he was the thief.

According to the lowest estimate, to have made the journey which we had accomplished, with a dragoman and tents, would have cost £2 a-day for each traveller, while the amount of black-mail to be paid to the Arabs would have been an indefinite sum, depending on the honesty of the dragoman and the apparent wealth of the caravan. But a party of tourists, travelling in the ordinary way, might consider themselves fortunate if they got off with £50 of *baksheesh*, in addition to the daily charge per head. Our united expenses, as far as Jerusalem from Beyrout, amounted to a little over £17, of which thirty shillings had been expended upon our zaptieh escorts for protection. In an ordinary season it would have been less, as horse-feed was nearly double its usual price, owing to the badness of the crops in consequence of the drought.

The next morning Elias suggested that we should deviate from the ordinary route and go to Jerusalem by the Neby Musa, or tomb of Moses, as this was the period of the great annual Moslem pilgrimage; and he assured us the sight was one well worth seeing. So we rode along the base of the hills in a southerly direction for an hour, and then, when we were about four miles from the Dead Sea, we turned westwards, scrambling up arid ravines till we reached the barren hill upon which the sacred edifice is situated, which

is supposed to mark the last resting-place of the great lawgiver. As, however, this was unquestionably to the east of the Jordan, no interest derived from any such association actually attached to it. Indeed the tradition only dates back to the thirteenth century.

It was still too early on the first day of the pilgrimage for pilgrims to have arrived from Jerusalem, but the place was in a bustle of preparation : booths were being erected, *cafés* and restaurants were being furnished, and inside the great courtyard of the building which contains the tomb, a crowd of people were collected round a well, all actively employed. Into this courtyard Elias entered, beckoning me to follow; so we dismounted, but had scarcely taken three steps inside when a shout of anger and dismay was set up, accompanied by such hostile gestures, that we beat a speedy retreat, and jumping on our steeds rode away, for it was evident that our profane entry had roused a feeling of indignation which in another moment would have manifested itself most unpleasantly. Whether this was a trap into which Elias tried to lead us designedly, I know not, and did not suspect it at the time. We, however, determined to push on for Jerusalem by ourselves, as there was no difficulty about finding the road, and left him to follow with the two baggage-animals and muleteers — Captain Phibbs's servant lending him his pistol for their protection.

During the remainder of our ride we met quantities of pilgrims journeying in every variety of oriental fashion to the sacred shrine, on horseback and in litters and *takhtarawans;* sometimes a mother with a family of young ones, ingeniously piled on the back of a mule; sometimes a whole female establishment, riding astride, guarded by lanky eunuchs, or a fat official sweltering in his uniform under the burning sun,—and so at last we reached Bethany, and came along the road leading past the Garden of Gethsemane, now lined on both sides by women in their snowy *feridgees* squatting on the terraces by the wayside, and watching the train of pilgrims issuing from the Jericho gate. For nearly a mile we rode between these chattering bundles of white cotton, and so made our entrance into the sacred city from its most picturesque side, under circumstances of unusual novelty and interest.

Three hours later the mules turned up; but Elias Daoud had stopped to drink at a fountain just below Bethany, and from that moment, in spite of the most active search being instituted for him, he and the pistol he had borrowed for our protection disappeared from our gaze for ever. He was the most plausible and fascinating of scoundrels, and possessing, besides, the great qualification of being a Christian, may yet hope to rise, under the enlightened protection of foreign Powers, to a position of affluence and dignity in the country.

I was so unfortunate as to reach Jerusalem, and to be compelled to remain in it during the greater part of Holy Week. Had I been witnessing the sights and ceremonials of a pagan religion they would have been interesting, as illustrating the various phases of superstition of which the human mind is capable. No doubt, regarded as a purely psychological study, this may be said to have been the case as applied to Christianity, but the interest was of too painful a nature to be gratified willingly. The crowds of pilgrims and devotees calling themselves Christian, who were only kept from flying at each other's throats over the tomb of the Founder of their religion by a strong guard of Moslem soldiers, evidently inspired the latter with a contempt and disgust which one felt compelled to share. Nor can we wonder that the followers of the Prophet who are called upon to protect the degrading rites and superstitions practised in this bitter and fanatic spirit, should regard some forms of modern Christianity as little better than paganism.

It is only due to the rival Christian sects to say that they do not confine their intense hatred and intolerance of each other to themselves. There is a short street near the Church of the Holy Sepulchre through which the Christians allow no Jew to pass. Nor does the Turkish Government care to raise a diplomatic question, and excite the religious susceptibilities of the foreign Powers who are engaged

in reforming the country, by insisting that this street, which is really a short cut and most useful thoroughfare, should be equally open to all classes of its subjects.

It is a fact worthy of notice, that the city which stands more in need of reform than any other in Turkey after Constantinople itself, is the one in which the Turkish Government is most powerless, and foreign influence most predominant, and which is called by a figure of speech "holy!" and that the people whom it would be found most difficult to reform, so far as toleration and orderly conduct are concerned, are the bigoted and fanatical Christians who have established themselves there as the guardians and representatives of its sacred character, or who frequent it for religious purposes.

The Jewish Feast of the Passover, which happened to occur during Easter week, contrasted strangely in its character of isolation, and almost of secrecy, with the contention, hubbub, and masquerade of the Christian festival. I felt it quite a relief on the night of the Passover to find myself away from the din of priests and worshippers, the guest of a humble family in the Jewish quarter, sharing with them the emblematic supper which celebrated their first deliverance. The only sound which broke the stillness of the night was the cadence of the chants from the various neighbouring houses, in each of which the feast was being held, which from time

to time swelled louder as the doors were opened in remembrance of the flight. I found so strong a belief prevailing that a second deliverance was at hand, more or less miraculous in its character, that I scarcely liked to intrude upon this occasion with the extremely prosaic and mundane idea of a colony which should be based rather upon commercial than upon religious considerations. As, however, I should be sorry to be supposed to have the presumption of wishing to interfere with the fulfilment of prophecy, as interpreted either by Jews or Christians; and as my main object in proposing the scheme has been in some degree to assist the Turkish Government out of a political and financial difficulty, and at the same time to improve the condition of a race who suffer much in various countries, I was able to discuss the project with various Jews in Palestine and Syria on its own merits, and invariably found that they regarded it with favour, provided that they were not themselves intrusted with the entire administration of the affairs of the colony in the first instance, as they were utterly wanting in experience, and provided, further, that the conditions of the purchase of land and its settlement were not made too onerous, and that the Turkish Government consented to grant a special *réglement*, which should secure the protection of life and property. Those with whom I conversed expressed no doubt that well-to-do and desirable

emigrants would be forthcoming in even too great abundance.

It is certainly not among the Jews of Jerusalem that I should look for colonists, with the exception, possibly, of a few among the Sephardim. The Ashkenazim established there are a useless mendicant class, who are now a burden upon their co-religionists, and would be equally so upon an enterprise, where not merely industry, but a small amount of capital would be essential.

On our way out of Jerusalem we visited the German colony of The Temple, situated in what some suppose to have been the valley of the Rephaim, through which passed the boundary-line between Judah and Benjamin. The branch of the colony located here is under the charge of Dr Hoffman, upon whom we called, and is the result of a divergence of opinion upon an abstruse theological point, which it would not be interesting to discuss here. The main body of the colony, under a different leader, is at Haifa, which I also subsequently visited; and there is a third section at Jaffa, which, I understand, owing to unhealthiness and other causes, has been almost abandoned. The colonies, both at Jerusalem and Haifa, are, however, financially and commercially prospering. The total number of souls, male and female, of the two branches, Dr Hoffman stated to be about 800: amongst his own flock were eight families of Mennonites. The houses were well built

stone mansions, each surrounded by its garden, forming a little street; while a splendid stretch of arable land, on which young spring crops were waving, gave a prospect of a fine harvest. The colonists have scarcely any trouble in their dealings with the Government: they are assessed on the value of their crops every year, and pay the money down. It would seem, in fact, that the difficulties with which they have had to contend, and which have so far disturbed their harmony, have been of a purely spiritual kind.

We turned off the direct road from Jerusalem to Nablous in order to visit Jifna, the ancient Gophnah, and pass the night there, partly because it was out of the beaten track, and we had heard of a convent at which we hoped to find good quarters, and partly because in the course of our investigations we had discovered that it was the native village of Elias Daoud, and I was anxious to see the other members of that gentleman's family; moreover, there was just a possibility of our finding him there on a visit. We were cordially welcomed on our arrival by the Catholic priest, who placed a room in the convent at our disposal, and we were delighted with the beauty of the spot we had thus accidentally lit upon. It was remarkable for its fertility and the excellence of the cultivation. The hillsides were carefully terraced and thickly planted with vines and olives, and the floor of the valley was a mass of gardens and

waving crops. In spite of this seeming prosperity we found the villagers in an extreme state of poverty and destitution. The sheikh of the village turned out to be the brother of Elias Daoud, and we went and sat in his smoke-grimed tenement, on mats, round a fire made on the floor, while he prepared coffee, and gave us the history of his respectable relative. Soon flocked in all "his sisters and his cousins and his aunts;" in fact the village seemed composed of his relatives. They evidently took a pride in the extreme disreputability of their kinsman, who had been celebrated for his adventurous exploits and his roving propensities since, as a boy, he had deserted his native village; and they laughed heartily at our experiences. By degrees we won their confidence, and they gave us many interesting details in regard to their own unhappy condition. They had been already taxed once this year, the tax-collector having arrived with his zaptiehs and quartered themselves, with fourteen horses, upon them for twenty days; and then, after they had with great difficulty scraped together the amount of the tax demanded, they could only get rid of them by a present of 500 *beshliks*, equal to about £20. Now a horrid rumour had reached them that, for a second time within the year, they were to be called upon for another pecuniary contribution to the Turkish treasury; and they were in despair at the prospect, for, as it was, they had scarcely enough left them to keep body

and soul together. They had planted wheat crops all through their vineyards in the hope of getting as much out of the land as possible; but it was a heart-breaking prospect, as the more money they made out of the land, the more they would be compelled to pay. The present method of collecting the taxes opens the door to any amount of fraud and oppression. The *dime* or tithe of the village is put up to auction. The purchaser is generally a large speculator who buys the tithe of a number of villages, and whose wealth makes him all-powerful with the local Turkish authorities, who go shares with him in the spoil. They furnish him with the necessary zaptiehs, and he comes down with them, like a vulture on his prey, on the unhappy peasantry, who, if they get off with a contribution of thirty per cent, instead of the ten which is due, esteem themselves fortunate. The Government gets defrauded even out of its tithe; for when the auction takes place the local authorities connive at the price for which it is sold, being much below its real value; the purchaser usually being a man of too much influence and wealth to be opposed by rival competitors.

The population of Jifna was composed entirely of Catholic Christians, and they hoped, through the representations of the priest, to bring pressure to bear at Jerusalem to avert the fate which seemed in store. In this respect they were better off than the Moslem peasantry of a neighbouring village, who

had been as heavily squeezed as they were, but who had no protection of any sort. The priest told us that the propensity of the Christian villages to fight amongst themselves very much aggravated the other misfortunes with which they had to contend. At the moment of our visit there was a blood-feud between Jifna and another Christian village, and last year five men of the latter had been killed; while only a few days before our arrival 125 olive-trees had been destroyed as an act of vengeance. Notwithstanding all which there was something very attractive about the *fellahin*, they were so cheerful under their miseries, and such a fine, handsome, hospitably disposed race. Both Moslems and Christians not unnaturally entertain a most profound dislike of their Turkish masters, considering how they are squeezed for taxes; and while the former are loyal to the Sultan, as the head of their religion, they are utterly devoid of any patriotic instinct, and would gladly welcome a change of rule which should bring with it greater security for life and property. The late war, and wholesale conscription incidental to it, has increased this feeling, while it has largely contributed to the poverty and distress of the people. No fewer than 150,000 of the Arab-speaking population of Syria and Palestine have been withdrawn from the active industry of the country, of which a very small proportion have returned. The Christians, among other privileges which they enjoy, have been

exempted from this burden. Mrs Finn, in her interesting account of the *fellahin*, gives a most graphic description of the terrors which the conscription excites among the Moslem peasantry, and confirms my own observations in regard to the inferior position occupied by them. On one occasion she says: "Our Christian *fellahah* from Bethlehem fully shared in the joy of the Jerusalem Christians that their sons were ineligible. It was amusing to hear her by turns chuckling over and sympathising with the griefs of the Moslem mothers. Indeed, generally speaking, she agreed with her townsfolk, the Christian Bethlehemites, that the Moslems were altogether an inferior people, and worse off than they, who had ever in time of need their sure refuge in the powerful protection of their convents, 'which may God continue to build up.'"

It seems rather hard upon the Moslems, whether they be Arab, or Turk, or Slav, that the sympathies of the British public should be entirely withheld from them on the ground that they do not bear the name of Christian, even though they may be of the same race. As a rule the Moslem peasant is, in fact, far more worthy of their sympathy, for he is more oppressed, more honest, more orderly, and quite as industrious. It is true that there are exceptions to the rule—as, for instance, among the Circassians and Kurds; but they form a small proportion of the Mohammedan population of the

empire. The religion of the former is of so vague a nature, that they can scarcely be called Moslem; and for the latter, who are a savage race of mountaineers, I claim no sympathy at all. It is for the poor down-trodden Moslem peasantry, devout according to their lights, whether Arab or Turk, than whom a race braver and more enduring in war, and more patient and well-conducted in time of peace, does not exist, that I would plead. In regard to the sentiments which both Moslems and Christians entertain towards their own Government there is very little difference. I do not see, therefore, why those in England who denounce the Turkish Government should make so great a distinction in their feelings towards those who share with them their dislike of the executive authority. If the result of their Christianity had been to make Christians in any way morally superior to Moslems, I could readily sympathise with the popular British sentiment upon the subject.

CHAPTER XII.

NABLOUS—THE MUTESSARIF—DESIRE FOR BRITISH OCCUPATION—JENIN—MOUNT GILBOA—THE PLAIN OF ESDRAELON—FARMING OPERATIONS ON A LARGE SCALE—THE GERMAN COLONY OF HAIFA—THE HARBOUR—ESFIA—ACRE—TURKISH OFFICIALS—TRADE OF ACRE—TYRE—SIDON.

FROM Jifna we rode to Nablous, the seat of government of the Mutessariflik, the whole of which is called in Turkish nomenclature "The Belka," though that name, as I before remarked, properly applies to the plains of Moab, and the region extending on the east of the Jordan northwards to the Jabbok. It comprises, in fact, the exact district proposed for colonisation, and it is most inconvenient that it should be tacked on to a province intervening between the Mutesseraflik of Acre and the government of Jerusalem, on the west of the Jordan, to which it is not contiguous. The consequence is, that the Caimakam at Salt is so far removed from his superior at Nablous that he is enabled to avoid supervision; while the Caimakam of Kerak, who also, nominally, owns allegiance to the governor at Nablous, was until lately practically independent. At Nablous we were most hospitably enter-

tained by Mr. Elkary, a missionary, and shortly after our arrival called on the Mutessarif, who received us with the greatest civility and ceremony. In fact he had somehow conceived the impression that we were persons of "distinction," travelling *incognito*—an extremely inconvenient idea to get abroad if one desires to travel economically, and really see something of the country, for it involves increased expenditure, and entails an amount of notoriety which is apt to produce a certain reticence among the timid poorer classes, while the authorities make it their business to throw as much dust as possible in one's eyes. Our entertainer, though apparently a man of some intelligence, evidently did not know as much about the part of the country we had just been exploring as we did ourselves, and we found that very little valuable information was to be obtained from him, though he was anxious to impress upon us the great change which his administration had produced, by reason of his improved management of the Arab tribes, and the greater security which existed in consequence—a fact which we were ready to admit, for our own experience to some extent confirmed it; but until the country to the east of the Jordan is made totally independent of that of the west, and put under a separate administration, no really permanent improvement can be introduced there. The Mutessarif insisted upon our being escorted by two zaptiehs on our next day's journey, though we

pleaded hard to be excused the honour, as the road was perfectly safe; but he seemed to consider it essential to our dignity: and after he had compelled us to accept a couple of antique rings which had been found at Kerak, we bade this amiable functionary a cordial adieu.

We found a very strong impression prevailing at Nablous, as well as in other parts of Syria and Palestine, that the occupation of the country by the English was imminent; and an amusing illustration of the readiness of the people to accept such an event was afforded during our stay there, for we were excitedly informed that the first detachment of the English army had just arrived, and in proof of the truth of the assertion we were assured that two officers were already quartered in a French convent, while the men were being billeted in the town. We, as mysterious persons of "distinction," were evidently connected with the event; indeed there seemed a suspicion of our having a somewhat regal character. We went in search of the "troops," and found a large party of exceedingly jolly tars on three days' leave from H.M.S. Rapid, then lying at Haifa, under charge of an officer. The towns-people, who were evidently looking forward to a golden harvest, consequent on a change of masters, seemed quite disappointed when we explained the mistake.

One of the great industries of Nablous is the manufacture of soap, the alkali being brought from

the eastern Belka, and largely from the neighbourhood of Jajûs, where we had seen the pollarded trees. There is also an unusual cultivation of cactus, or prickly-pear, on the hills which overhang the town; and it occurred to me that in a country so eminently favourable to its growth as Palestine, on both sides of the Jordan, it might be possible to introduce the cochineal as a profitable production.

It was a hot seven hours' ride through the barren mountains of Samaria to Jenin. We sent back our zaptiehs shortly after we got outside of the town of Nablous; but this did not prevent the news of our grandeur having preceded us, and we seemed to increase in importance as we proceeded, for we found a guard of honour waiting for us outside the village to escort us to the quarters at the Medjliss which had been provided for us, and where we found the village notables assembled. The Caimakam himself was absent with 100 soldiers on a raid against the Beni Sukhrs at Beisan, the ancient Bethshan or Scythopolis, distant about thirteen miles. These Arabs, who seemed to have returned to the country since the Caimakam of Ajlun's raid, had come down to avail themselves of the growing crops of the peasantry, and to levy contributions. We regretted we had not arrived the day before, so as to have accompanied him; but as we received intelligence that he had taken twelve prisoners without resistance, and

that the affair was over, we did not think it worth while to go out of our way to join him. We had looked down on the plains of Beisan from Gadara, and did not therefore require to see the country again. It is a magnificently fertile, but at present, owing to a want of drainage, a very feverish and unhealthy tract, very sparsely inhabited, in consequence of the predatory incursions of the Arabs, but susceptible in the highest degree of improvement. About 200,000 acres of the best land in Palestine are now lying waste in this neighbourhood, and in the adjoining Sandjak of Tiberias, which would all doubtless be brought into cultivation in the event of the formation of a colony in Gilead, as the proposed railway would pass through the centre of it, and would bring with it the sense of security which would encourage emigration and capital. An essential preliminary, however, would be a thorough system of drainage. We turned aside from the direct route to Nazareth on the following day, and scrambled up to the top of the isolated mountain of Gilboa. From its rocky summit, upwards of 1700 feet above the level of the sea, we obtained a most commanding view of the topographical features of the country. Below us, and running north-west for a distance of twenty-four miles, lay the fertile plain of Esdraelon, now almost entirely in the hands of Mr Sursuk, a Greek, of whose farming operations I shall speak presently. From the village of Jezreel, which was at our feet,

the ground trends gradually down to Beisan, which, from our lofty elevation, seemed also almost immediately beneath us.

Following the brook Kishon from the port of Haifa a railway could traverse the plain of Esdraelon to the summit level, which is only about 250 feet above the sea, and thence passing through the gap between the hills at Jezreel, descend into the valley of the Jordan, by a gentle incline the whole way, without a cutting or embankment of any sort. The best line, however, would probably be by the valley of Alammalech, the modern Melik, a tributary of the Kishon, and so through the fertile plain of El Buttauf to Tiberias. We looked down upon this line afterwards from the top of the Jebel es Sikh behind Nazareth; it presents no greater engineering difficulties than that by way of Esdraelon, and the advantage of going to Tiberias is, that a branch could more easily be taken from that point to Damascus than from Beisan. However, that is a point upon which competent engineers would have no difficulty in deciding. It is certain that either line could be constructed at a most trifling cost as far as the valley of the Jordan.

The most interesting agricultural feature of all this country is unquestionably Esdraelon. This plain was formerly raided over by the Beni Sukhr, who claimed a sort of prescriptive right to it, and were rapidly reducing it to the condition of the valley of the Jor-

dan and the country round Beisan, when it fell into the hands of Mr Sursuk, a Greek banker, in 1872, who now owns about seventy square miles of some of the finest land in Palestine. For this I was informed that he paid £18,000, only £6000 of which ever found its way into the treasury of the Government. The distinguished Turkish statesman—now no more—who is popularly charged, either rightly or wrongly, with having pocketed the remaining £12,000, it is not necessary to name. The investment has turned out eminently successful; indeed so much so, that I found it difficult to credit the accounts of the enormous profits which Mr Sursuk derives from his estate. In the first place, he is his own tithe-farmer. He has over twenty villages on his property, which contain a population of 4000 peasants. He is, perhaps, rather a feudal superior than a proprietor in the ordinary sense of the term, for the peasants exercise a sort of ownership. They pay one-tenth of the crop to the Government, one-tenth to him, and ten *mejidies* for every *feddan* of land besides: a *feddan* is as much as a yoke of oxen can plough in a day, and a *mejidie* is equal to about 4s. 6d. Besides this, as the peasantry are all in his debt, he is able to lend them money at his own rate of interest, and has complete control of his security. When the village tithes are offered for sale by the Government, nobody is able to compete for their purchase with so powerful a rival, who is at the

same time part owner. He therefore becomes the farmer of them, and is in a position, should either he or the local government officials wish to lend themselves to any such practice, which I by no means wish to insinuate is the case, to make arrangements which would be far more profitable to themselves than to the Government. It is popularly asserted on the spot that considerably over £20,000 a-year is extracted from this plain of Esdraelon, in one form or other, by this fortunate speculator. I once heard it put as high as £40,000. On the whole, I should say that the country has nevertheless benefited by his operations; the Arabs have been driven out: and although I confess I did not observe that those of his villages which I visited seemed more comfortable or well-to-do than other villages in the neighbourhood, they owe it in some measure to the powerful protection which one rich man can command, that they exist at all. The facts are instructive in many ways. They show how profitable farming in Palestine may be made. They prove how quickly capital brings protection, and how easy the Arabs really are to deal with, if they have any proprietor other than a half-starved *fellah* to deal with; and it also illustrates how open the present system of tithe-farming is to possible abuse, and how desirable it would be to substitute for it one of assessment. It is also important to observe that the great success of Mr Sursuk has been due to his employing native labour,

and to associating the peasants with him as copartners on a principle which very soon reduced them to being his absolute dependants and slaves.

There is a good carriage-road, about twenty-two miles long, from Nazareth to Haifa, which has been constructed by the German colonists established at the latter place. They supply the monks and other residents of Nazareth with butter, vegetables, and other garden produce, and convey tourists sometimes between the two places; altogether their enterprise is telling in many ways on the country, and notably in the construction of roads in the immediate neighbourhood of Haifa, where the country is flat, and they can be easily made, and in the introduction of wheeled vehicles. Their immediate influence on the town of Haifa itself is very perceptible. The colony is situated about a mile beyond the old town, which contains a population of over 4000, of whom 1000 are Jews. It is a thriving, growing place, thanks to the proximity of the German colony; and since their establishment about eighty substantial stone houses have been built. We took up our quarters at an excellent little hotel, kept by one of the colonists, and might have imagined ourselves in a small neat German town. Every where the signs of thrift and industry were apparent. The village consists of two streets, of well-built stone houses, each standing separately in its own garden, the streets lined with young trees; and the most scrupulous tidiness

was everywhere apparent. We called on the head of the rival spiritual schism, and found him perfectly satisfied with the prospects of the colony, and with the progress it had made so far. The number of Germans at present established under the shadow of Mount Carmel is 400, and they cultivate about 1000 acres of fair land, lying between the Mount and the sea; while up its steep slopes vineyards are terraced, turning its bare rocky flanks into verdure, and giving evidence of what the barren hillsides of Palestine must once have been. These colonists seem to be on perfectly good terms with the natives, whose language many of them speak, and to have no difficulty with the Government. Mr Conder, R.E., considers that Haifa possesses capabilities as a harbour superior to any other port upon the coast of Syria. It is the only place at which the Austrian Lloyd's steamboats touch in winter; and although it is exposed to winds from the north-west, he is of opinion that a mole, at a comparatively trifling expense, might be run out in continuation of the Carmel ridge, constructed of the limestone of which the mountain is composed. There are still ruins of an ancient port near this headland. In a recent article in 'Blackwood's Magazine,' called "The Haven of Carmel," the subject has been very fully treated; and it would seem, from the judgment of those who have carefully studied the question, that no better terminus could be found for a railway which should enter the heart of the country, than

this point. The bay of Acre, on the southern shore of which Haifa is situated, is an indention of the coast about three miles in depth; while exactly opposite to it, on a projecting point, is the town of Acre, distant about eight miles.

As I was anxious to look over the high-rolling country to the south of Carmel, we made an expedition to Esfia, a Druse village situated at the highest point of the range, at an altitude of about 1800 feet above the sea-level. For this purpose we had to retrace our steps for a few miles out of Haifa, passing through the rich gardens which lie eastward of the town, and the grove of palm-trees which is its most characteristic and distinguishing feature. Then we turned up a wild gorge in the ridge, forcing our way by an almost imperceptible goat-track through the dense jungle with which the steep sides of the hill are here clothed. We had sent our servants direct to Acre, and were quite alone, so we were not long before we succeeded in losing ourselves. However, we were rescued from our dilemma by hearing the notes of a reed-pipe betokening the presence of a shepherd, whom we bribed to leave his flock and serve as our guide. Behind him we clambered by steep and devious paths to a spot which well repaid the exertions we made to reach it, so wild and romantic was it, hidden away in the recesses of the mountain—the vineyards, olive-groves, and gardens, all crowded into a charm-

ing glen, where there was a picturesque fountain, round which were a group of Druse women filling their water-jars, who seemed startled by the sudden bursting in upon their seclusion of strangers; for the village is one never visited by the ordinary tourist, and is doubly interesting from the fact that it contains an isolated Druse community who have been located here for hundreds of years, far removed from their co-religionists in the Lebanon and Hauran, with whom, nevertheless, they informed us they maintained occasional relations. From here we could look over "The Breezy Land," warmly recommended by Conder for colonisation purposes; and a tempting land it looked, accessible to the sea, and, from all accounts, fertile and well watered; but as there is comparatively little of it actually owned by the Government, it would nearly all require to be purchased from the peasant proprietors, who, although they only cultivate it partially, hold *tapoo* papers, or would put in claims of ownership. No doubt it could be bought cheap, and would be a desirable district for development, but any attempt at colonisation here would be on a much smaller scale, and would not be susceptible of the same administrative autonomy as the unoccupied country to the east of the Jordan.

The whole population of the village gathered round us when we dismounted in the middle of it, to refresh ourselves with the food we had brought

in our pockets, and we at once observed a marked difference in the type and manner of the peasantry from that of the other villages. There were, however, a few Christians resident in Esfia. On our way back we had a magnificent view over the plain and bay of Acre, with the ranges of the Galilee mountains beyond; and plunging down to it by a very precipitous descent, were once more thrown upon our own instinct of locality to find our way. This led us into a perfect wilderness of sand-dunes, amid which, to the great distress of our poor horses, we floundered knee-deep in the loose sand in what seemed likely to be a vain attempt to reach the sea-shore. This, however, we at last succeeded in doing, and were only too thankful to cool ourselves by plunging into the waves. Then spurring on our jaded steeds, we reached Acre almost as tired as they were about sunset.

Acre is the seat of government of the Mutessariflik; and the governor, even more *empressé* than his colleague at Nablous, no sooner heard of our arrival, than he sent to announce his intention of paying us a visit. We received him at the French convent, at which we had put up, with all the state we could muster, and were on the whole favourably impressed by his apparent desire to do his duty, and improve the condition of his province. The appearance of an Englishman in search of information, and with letters enjoining civility on the

authorities, suggests to their minds, in the existing state of relations between Turkey and England, a reform inspector of some kind, and they are consequently extremely anxious to impress upon him their determination to remedy abuses, abolish corruption, and introduce a new order of administration. With a suppressed and somewhat mysterious air of official dignity, the casual traveller might exercise a very wholesome influence on the minds of the more timid and impressionable functionaries. Now and then, doubtless, he would come across one of the old school, who would resent his interference fiercely, and treat him with the most profound contempt, if not insult; but the general tone of those with whom I came in contact led me to believe that, under the apprehension which exists of the English Government being likely to exercise an active, and, if necessary, forcible supervision over the internal administration of the country, a very decided impression might be produced upon the local authorities by properly authorised English officials,—the more especially as the people of all classes, religions, and races, have fixed their hopes on England as their deliverer from the evils of the administration under which they are now suffering; but the conviction must be produced that if remonstrances are disregarded, stronger measures will be resorted to.

The Mutessarif told us that the combined effects of the withdrawal for the war of so large a proportion of

the labouring population—of the cattle disease, which had been raging virulently in some parts of his province—of the unusual drought—and of the necessity of squeezing taxes out of the people for the purpose of supplying the demands from Constantinople, —had produced an unparalleled amount of misery, which he had found himself powerless in any way to mitigate. He was extremely anxious to see a railway constructed from the bay of Acre into the interior, and considered that Haifa would be a better terminus for it than Acre, not merely because the harbour was superior, but because, owing to Acre being a fortress, it was incapable of extension. Inside the walls, three-fourths of the town are taken up by barracks and Government buildings; and outside, no building is allowed to be built which would interfere with the fortifications. He had applied for permission to extend the town beyond the walls, but it had been refused. Nevertheless Acre remains from old tradition the emporium of the grain trade from the Hauran, and during the season from 4000 to 5000 camel-loads of grain arrive daily. Tyre and Tripoli are also great grain emporia, but Acre far surpasses either of them. If a railway, such as I propose, existed, Haifa would become the great depot on the coast for the whole of the interior. No doubt great quantities of sheep and cattle would also be sent down to it from Jaulan and the grazing-lands in the interior for exportation to Egypt and

other markets. Another curious article of traffic for which a railway is eminently adapted, are basalt grindstones from the Lejah. These now come on the backs of camels, principally to Tyre, where I saw a collection of them ; but as one forms a camel-load, they become pretty expensive by the time they reach their destination. The Mutessarif was strongly in favour of the line going by the plain of El Buttauf rather than by the plain of Esdraelon.

Tyre, which we reached on the following day, is a most attractive little town, with a charming back country; but it does not possess the same elements of commercial prosperity, nor is its port so easily capable of reconstruction as its neighbour and ancient rival Sidon. Here the mercantile community is more active, and has struggled manfully with the commercial difficulties with which they have had to contend. In former days the great industries were tobacco and silk, which they produced and exported in large quantities. The trade of Sidon in both articles has now been almost completely extinguished. The heavy duties put by the Government upon tobacco, even when exported from one port in Turkey to another, has entirely ruined the tobacco cultivation, and Sidon now only grows enough for its own consumption. The silk trade has been seriously checked by the opening of the Suez Canal, which brought Eastern silk into ruinous competition with that which the

Sidonians were able to produce. They now chiefly depend for their exports upon the lovely and extensive gardens which surround the town, and in which olives, oranges, bananas, and apricots are the principal objects of cultivation. All fruit, however, grows magnificently in the neighbourhood of Sidon; and its annual export to Egypt alone, chiefly of fresh and dried fruit, is over 2,000,000 piastres. It is estimated that the port could be reconstructed at an expenditure of only £30,000, and there can be no doubt, if this be so, that it would well repay some enterprising English capitalist to undertake the work; for in spite of the factitious prosperity of Beyrout, which has no harbour at all, Sidon would then, from its proximity to some of the most fertile regions in the Lebanon, spring into importance and attract a shipping trade on which dues could be levied which would amply repay the investment.

Though not included within the ancient limits of Palestine, Sidon will probably be comprised within the future boundaries of this interesting country as its destiny begins to unfold itself.

I have touched but lightly on my return journey from Jerusalem to Beyrout, for I scarcely diverged from the beaten track of tourists; and the whole of Western Palestine has now been so thoroughly explored and examined by the officers engaged in its recent survey, that little remains to be said about it. There can be no doubt that, in spite of its barren

and unpromising aspect in parts, this country is capable of great development; indeed it is, with the exception of the Lebanon, the only province of the Turkish empire in which, of late years, a certain progress has been made; and I believe that the successful creation of a colony to the east of the Jordan, connected with the sea-coast by a railway, would infallibly bring a stream of immigrants and a flow of capital into Western Palestine, under the influence of which it would speedily become one of the most productive and fertile provinces of the Turkish empire.

CHAPTER XIII.

EXCURSION FROM BEYROUT—AIN ANUB—A DRUSE ASSEMBLY—DRUSE CHARACTER—THEIR DIPLOMACY—A SILK FACTORY—THE VALLEY OF THE DAMUR—PROSPERITY OF THE LEBANON ACCOUNTED FOR—DER EL KAMR—THE MARONITE PRIESTHOOD—BETEDDIN—FEATS OF HORSEMANSHIP—A NOISY WELCOME—ARRIVAL AT MUKHTARA.

THE traveller whose experience of Syria has been confined to its seaboard, and who has been contented to gaze at the snow-clad summits or barren-looking spurs of the Lebanon from the deck of a steamer or the veranda of a Beyrout hotel, can form no conception of the gems of scenery which lie buried in the wildest recesses of the range, and of the peculiar charm which its more remote and inaccessible valleys possess. Even the road which traverses the mountains from Beyrout to Damascus fails to convey any adequate idea of the country which is to be found on either side of it, and which can only be explored by those prepared to encounter the hardships and discomforts which must always attend travel in a region where highways and hotels are unknown. In the first journey which I under-

took in the Lebanon these inconveniences were, however, reduced to a minimum, and I was fortunate in visiting one of its most interesting and beautiful districts under auspices exceptionally favourable. One of the most powerful and well known of the Druse chiefs invited me to pay him a visit; and as he was about to entertain Mr Eldridge, H.M.'s Consul-General for Syria, the latter was so good as to propose that I should form one of his party—an offer which I thankfully accepted.

It was on a hot April afternoon, two days after my arrival from Sidon, that we left Beyrout by the Damascus road in two carriages, traversing for a couple of hours the productive and beautiful gardens which surround the city, until we came to the spot where further progress in wheeled vehicles became impossible, and we found our horses waiting to carry us up the steep mountain-path which led to our night-quarters. We wound upwards through groves of olives and mulberries,—through gardens where peaches and apricots were in full bloom, where the fig-trees gave promise of a luscious harvest, where the whole atmosphere was redolent of the delicious odours of orange and lemon trees white with blossom; along terraces where grain crops were waving, and the dark green of scattered pine-trees contrasted with the brighter foliage; across sparkling rills of purest water gushing from the hill-sides, where women were filling their water-jars

before nightfall; while the view of the rich plain we had left, bathed in a sunset haze, grew ever more extended as we mounted higher, and the tints which played over it more exquisitely soft and varied, as the rays became more widely diffused.

We were now entering the essentially Druse district of Esh-shuf, which is governed by a Caimakam appointed by the Governor-General of the Lebanon, selected from among the leading Druse families, and who is recognised as the official head of the Druses in the Lebanon. The present occupant of this important position is the Emir Mustapha Ruslan, still a young man, and the head of a family which, if it does not wield the most powerful influence in the Lebanon, enjoys the distinction, where questions of precedence are involved, of ranking above all others by virtue of the title of Emir which is vested in the head of the house—a circumstance which no doubt largely influenced the Governor-General in making the appointment.

We were to pass the night at the residence of this high functionary; and as we approached the village of Ain Anub, or "Fountain of Palms," in which his house is situated, he came out to meet us riding a handsome Arab gaily caparisoned, and accompanied by about twenty mounted retainers and village notables.

The path was so rocky and narrow that we could only scramble along it in single file; and as we

approached the village, it was bordered with roses and pomegranates. The villagers came out to meet us in the dusk, standing in a row, and touching the ground in low salutation as we passed, until we pulled up at the archway which formed the entrance to our host's abode—an extensive two-storeyed edifice, built against the steep hillside, the flat roofs of the lower apartments forming terraces on which the upper or principal rooms opened. These terraces commanded a wonderful view of coast-line and fertile valleys, and of Beyrout itself, with its gardens on one side and sand-hills on the other, stretching out on its promontory seaward.

The reception-room, fitted with divans, was soon filled with a crowd of visitors, consisting of the sheikhs of the neighbouring villages, who had come here to make the Consul-General acquainted with their views in regard to certain questions of internal politics in which they were interested. Ever since the Druse nation was saved from extinction by British intervention and the firmness and skill of Lord Dufferin, they have looked upon the English as their natural protectors and allies. I have met individual Druses travelling in other parts of Syria who, finding I was an Englishman, at once called themselves countrymen; and they are generally considered, both by Christians and Moslems, to be identified to a peculiar extent with the British: hence the influence of the British Consul, if judi-

ciously wielded, can be all-powerful; and they naturally come to him as their guide, philosopher, and friend, to expound their grievances if they have any, to make known their wishes, and if there is any internal question or difference of opinion among themselves, to endeavour to enlist him on their side. The matter which on this occasion they came to discuss was evidently one which interested them warmly; but they approached it somewhat circuitously, and only after a long preamble consisting chiefly of compliments. Three or four of the principal speakers rang the changes on these for some time, skilfully drawing nearer to the point by degrees, like the sportsman who tries to approach an animal by going round it with constantly diminishing circles, hoping thereby to lull the suspicions of his prey until he has got within shot. With a little practice these Druses would make first-rate diplomats; and I would suggest to the Foreign Office whether, considering how much need there is in that department of the special qualities which the Druses possess in so eminent a degree, it might not be advantageously recruited from this source. Under a bold, frank, manly exterior, they conceal the utmost subtlety and cunning, and have a captivating way of deceiving which quite redeems it from anything base or unworthy. They are indebted to their religion for this art, and from early youth are trained to economise truth, and to dis-

semble both with Moslem and Christian in respect to their creed. They have one moral standard in their dealings with each other, and another which governs their intercourse with the rest of the world. Dissimulation is recognised by their religion as a laudable acquirement, and the necessity for it has doubtless been forced upon them by the peculiarity of their position. A mere handful of believers in tenets which, if they were generally known, would expose them to attack and persecution, they have learnt to become all things to all men, and even profess a sort of Mohammedanism among Moslems, just as they would with equal readiness profess Christianity did circumstances require it, whilst they were secretly nourishing a supreme contempt for both religions. They have a proverb which exactly expresses this tendency: "A man's shirt," they say, "does not change the colour of his skin." Hence they can transform the seeming of the outward man with great facility; but it is very difficult to see beneath the shirts and to discover the colour of the moral epidermis. From the extremely bold and independent character of the race, it is probable that, were they powerful enough, they would scorn the devices to which an instinct of self-preservation has driven them to resort. Their Jesuitism, not having proselytism for its object, is not so much an inherent trait of their character as a growth upon it, and differs from that of Christians who practise

arts of this description in the name of religion, as the cunning of the wild animal does from that of the poacher who is setting snares for him. We can excuse, and even admire, the one, while we have no sympathy with the other. Thus a Druse, though he may be as wily as a fox, is the very opposite of a sneak; and his bold eye, and open and almost defiant countenance, are evidence that he attaches no idea of shame to proficiency in the arts of deception which he practises.

Our friends at Ain Anub, when they did get to the point, seemed to think that a great deal was to be done by a constant reiteration of it. After one chief had made his statement, which you felt meant something more than it openly expressed, another one would suddenly seem struck with an entirely new notion, and make identically the same statement in slightly varied language, with the same innuendo at the back of it; and this would go all round the circle, until, out of the slight variations, it dawned upon one what the hidden idea, to which none of them had given plain utterance, really was. As I listened to them, it occurred to me that these men would not only do for diplomatists, but would make excellent members of Parliament, and even Cabinet Ministers. Their faculty for saying one thing while meaning another, or for meaning more or less than they said as circumstances might require, was equal to anything I ever heard from the

Treasury bench; while they possessed that imperturbability of countenance and immobility of expression which so many distinguished parliamentary leaders have vainly struggled to acquire.

I was for some time a most interested listener, and was peculiarly struck by the fine *physique* and proud bearing of many of the sheikhs. They kept hammering away at the same point so much, that latterly I got somewhat bored; but possibly that was the best way of carrying it. The patience of our Consul-General seemed, however, inexhaustible; and as his experience in "the mountain" has been great, he understood exactly what they were driving at, and they probably obtained as much satisfaction as was deemed desirable. We sat down ten to dinner, which our host served to us in European style, his *chef* evidently being an artist of some pretensions; and our sleeping accommodation was equally civilised. Unfortunately it came on to blow a *khamsin* in the night, and the heat was insufferable—the hot wind whistling through every crevice, and so withering us up, that in the morning we felt disinclined for any exertion, and decided upon postponing our departure till next day. This was a great opportunity for the sheikhs, who came and rehearsed the scene of the evening before over again. The only way to pass the day was to lie and pant in the shade, and look at the view; but in the afternoon I mustered energy enough to mount

my horse and ride up to the village of Shimlan, situated near the top of the range, about 3000 feet above the sea-level, and commanding a still more magnificent prospect. Here one of the largest silk factories in the Lebanon is in full operation, and I was glad of the opportunity of examining the process. Unfortunately, the cocoon, which once gave the Lebanon silk its great superiority, no longer exists, and has been replaced by those introduced from Japan, which are larger in size but inferior in texture to those which have suffered extinction. Still, the silk industry is almost the only one in the province which is flourishing, and is indeed the staple product of the country. Its manufacture furnishes employment to some 6000 hands, to say nothing of the agricultural labour involved in the growth of mulberry-trees, the picking of the leaves, and so forth.

Our road next morning lay across the ridge down into the valley of the Damur, which flows through a wild gorge towards the sea. We now lost sight of the coast, and our gaze wandered instead over the lovely valley beneath us, with villages nestling amid brightly varied foliage, or clinging to the sides of rugged rocks, their flat roofs sometimes supported by pillars and resting on arches, which gave them a peculiar and often elegant appearance. We descended into the gorge by a steep and very bad road, and then crossed the river—which here wildly

dashes between overhanging crags—by a picturesque bridge called Jisr el Kadi. We met an old lady on it closely veiled, riding astride on a donkey, who, recognising the leader of our party, screamed out in a cracked voice, "God bless the Father of the Druses! God bless England and give her victory!" with many other warm expressions of goodwill. Indeed I found the Druse women far more eager politicians than Eastern females usually are, and very demonstrative in their way of expressing their sympathies. The hillsides were carpeted with wild flowers, among the most beautiful and conspicuous of which was the cyclamen in various shades, and growing in great abundance. Anemones, asphodel, iris, broom, and many other flowers were in full bloom, and the air was fragrant with scent. Near the river I observed a quantity of myrtle. Clambering up the side of the opposite hill, we soon reached a spring in an olive-grove, which had been fixed upon as our mid-day resting-place; and here we enjoyed that delightful hour of repose, the pleasures of which are familiar to every traveller who has ridden much in hot countries. The only drawback to it is that it has an end, and that a moment comes when one has once more to face the sun and the fatigue. We climbed another ridge, and descended upon a valley more thickly populated and richly cultivated than the one we had left—one of the most beautiful, as it is one of the most fertile, districts in the Leb-

anon. When one has been riding, as I had for some weeks previously, over the barren hills and wretched cultivation of thinly populated Western Palestine, it is impossible not to be struck by the contrast which the Lebanon presents, and which points its own moral.

The comparative prosperity which the country enjoys is clearly to be attributed to the administrative concessions which were granted to the Lebanon after the massacres. No doubt the population is more civilised and enterprising than in many other parts of the Turkish empire, and their industrious habits are largely due to the fact that the area is so limited, and so thickly peopled, that every foot of land has to be cultivated; but apart from this, there is a material wellbeing apparent, which is the result of the special privileges which have been granted to the people, and which exempts them from that vexatious interference from Constantinople that paralyses good government in so many of the other provinces of Turkey. The baleful influence of the corrupt centre thus extends to the extremities, and all efforts of the local authorities, however well intended, to reform abuses, are neutralised by the intrigues of those who fatten upon such abuses, and share the plunder which they derive from them with influential politicians at Constantinople. No sooner is this most unhealthy bond of union severed than the province thus disconnected begins to improve. Under

the rule of even a tolerably good governor, its industries begin to revive; flagrant abuses, no longer protected at headquarters, are remedied; and the people, masters to some extent of their own destinies, enjoy a security of life and property to which they have heretofore been strangers, and which encourages their spirit of enterprise. These signs of prosperity were conspicuously apparent as we approached the large town of Der el Kamr, which lays claim to the distinction of being the capital of the Lebanon. It is situated on a steep hillside, but every inch of the slope is terraced and cultivated with vines, mulberries, fig and other fruit trees, and grain. There is not enough corn raised, however, to supply the wants of the population. The town contains from 7000 to 8000 inhabitants, and the houses were superior in construction and architecture generally to anything I had yet seen in the Lebanon. In former days Der el Kamr was a great Druse centre; but the Druses were driven out of it at the time of the massacres, and have now established their headquarters at Baaklin, a village six or seven miles distant, and just hidden from view by the ridge of the other side of the valley.

Although in the middle of a Druse district, Der el Kamr is almost exclusively Maronite, and was in a great state of ferment on the day of our arrival, for news had just been received of the pardon, under very humiliating conditions, of one of their leading

bishops, who had been exiled about a year before by the Governor-General, Rustem Pasha, for intriguing against his Government, and making himself generally obnoxious. As the entire Maronite population in the Lebanon only numbers about 150,000 souls, and as their spiritual welfare is confided to one patriarch, ten bishops, and some 7000 or 8000 monks and priests, it may be readily imagined that the ecclesiastical pot is kept perpetually on the boil, and that a large supply of hot water is always gushing forth from this disproportionately large clerical reservoir. It is an indisputable fact, and one susceptible of verification by any one who likes to take the trouble, that throughout both European and Asiatic Turkey, just in proportion as the clerical element preponderates in a Christian community, whether it be Catholic or Greek, are intrigues rampant, are quarrels instigated, and atrocities perpetrated. Where the proportion is so very large as in the Lebanon, even a massacre becomes possible; and although upon the last occasion the slaughter recoiled upon those who instigated it, the instigators do not seem to have taken warning. The old fanatical influences are still at work, and are a source of endless trouble and difficulty to the unfortunate Governor-General, even though, as in the case of the Lebanon, he must be himself a Christian. When he manifests impartiality, he is accused of impiety; while his attempts to control the passions of his fellow-Christians are stigmatised as treachery

to a religion which professes to be one of brotherly love.

There has not for some time been a Governor-General of the Lebanon who has displayed greater firmness, tact, and impartiality than Rustem Pasha, the present occupant of that high office, and he has consequently to struggle against the whole clerical influence of the country. His task is rendered doubly difficult from the fact that the Maronites are under a special French protectorate; and although the present Government of France is not disposed to exercise its influence in favour of clericalism, the whole Catholic party in France is always ready to espouse the cause of the Maronite priesthood, doubtless from conscientious though mistaken motives; and this strong sympathy is apt to develop political consequences which call for the exercise of the greatest tact and moderation on the part of the diplomatic agents both of France and England in this quarter. Fortunately, when a healthy understanding exists, as has been the case for some time past, between the Governor-General of the Lebanon and the Consuls-General of England and France, these disturbing influences can be controlled,—for the population, when not worked upon by their priests, desire nothing more than to be allowed to live in peace and harmony with their Druse and Moslem neighbours; and it is wonderful, considering the violence of the passions which were aroused less than twenty years ago, and the scenes

of bloodshed to which they gave rise, how much good feeling existed among the peasantry, in spite of the never-ceasing efforts of their spiritual advisers to destroy it. This arises possibly from the fact that, with an increase of prosperity, the influence of the priesthood is somewhat on the wane; while the unblushing effrontery with which they amass wealth and drain the country for the maintenance of their ecclesiastical establishments, does not tend to increase their popularity. In Der el Kamr there was a decided clerical and anti-clerical party; and although the clerical party was the strongest—for the residence of the aggrieved bishop was in the immediate neighbourhood of the town, and his local influence was therefore considerable—I was surprised, on conversing on the matter with some of its inhabitants, to find how very decidedly his conduct was condemned, and how warmly the action of the Governor-General was supported.

We were met before entering the town by a mounted deputation, who formed an escort. Among the notables were several who spoke French, and there was altogether an air of civilisation about the place which one hardly expected to find in a remote valley of the Lebanon. A good carriage-road, about two miles long, connects Der el Kamr with the palace of Beteddin, the summer residence of the Governor-General, who, unfortunately for us, was absent on the occasion of our visit. The town and the palace stand

facing each other on opposite sides of the valley. Both are about 3000 feet above the level of the sea, and the view of each from the other is strikingly picturesque. The rambling palace of Beteddin is perched on a projecting promontory, and forms an imposing object as one ascends to it from the bottom of the valley. As we clattered up to the gateway we received quite a magnificent reception : two hundred men—all Lebanon militia, but as well set up and uniformed as any line regiment—were drawn up, and presented arms as we passed into the large outer court, which is at once a parade-ground and principal entrance to the palace; round it are barracks for 600 men, prisons, the military store departments, and various offices. Passing through a gateway ornamented with frescoes and mosaic-work, we enter another courtyard, and here I was strongly reminded of the old palace of the Tartar Khans at Baktshi Serai, in the Crimea. It was surrounded by apartments and galleries, and a fountain played in the middle—indeed there was a wealth of water everywhere throughout the palace. Then we passed through still another gateway, more elaborately decorated with carving and Arabesque work, which led us into an inner court. This had formerly been the harem, but the Governor-General had made it his private apartments and reception-rooms. Here we were entertained with coffee and sherbet by the officer in command of the troops, and we talked over

the politics of the Lebanon past and present, and of the history of the palace, and its builder in particular. As it is little more than fifty years since it was completed, this history does not go very far back, and the influence of the stirring events of which it was the scene still strongly colours the politics of "the Mountain." The Druses, like the Highlanders of Scotland, with whom they have many national characteristics in common, are essentially feudal, and their history resolves itself into a record of perpetual struggles for supremacy between rival chiefs or heads of clans.

During the last century the two most powerful families in the Lebanon were the Shehab and the Jumbelât. In those days it used to be said that the Shehab were the brains, the Jumbelât the purse, and another family, distinguished for its valour in war, the sword of the Druses. The Shehab are said originally to have come from the Hauran in the time of the Crusaders, and to have settled at Hasbeya, on the slopes of Mount Hermon, where they acquired great power and influence. About 200 years ago they moved to this part of the Lebanon, and took an active share in the clan warfare which was continually going on between the principal families. By degrees they acquired an almost paramount influence, and in 1789 the since celebrated Emir Beshir, then chief of the family, was chosen as head Sheikh of the Druses. At this time the author-

ity of the Porte in the Lebanon was little more than nominal, and the Christians were unable to compete in warlike prowess with the Druses, who practically governed the country. As, however, the Druses were constantly fighting among themselves, the Maronites could always make their influence felt by allying themselves with one side or the other; and the Emir Beshir, in order the better to conciliate them, professed to have strong Christian tendencies, and allowed it even to be supposed that he was a thorough Christian at heart. His great rival was the Sheikh Beshir, of the Jumbelât family—a man who, in addition to his great natural gifts, possessed immense wealth, and wielded a corresponding influence. At first the Emir Beshir found it to be for his interest to keep on good terms with his powerful rival, the Sheikh Beshir, waiting for the day to come when his schemes were so far matured, and his power sufficiently consolidated, that he might take a line of his own. In furtherance of his project, he went to Egypt to seek the alliance of Ibrahim Pasha; and when this was secured, and he found himself able to defy his rival, the smouldering fire burst forth, and a fierce contest ensued, which was decided on a plain—which I afterwards crossed—and the Emir Beshir, assisted by the Egyptians, was victorious, and succeeded in capturing the Sheikh Beshir, whom he sent as a prisoner to Acre, where he was strangled, and his property confiscated.

The Egyptians having thus, with the aid of the Emir Beshir, obtained a foothold in the Lebanon, proceeded, in order to secure themselves there, to disarm the Druses; for although the Sheikh Beshir had been conquered, a large party remained faithful to his cause, and vehemently opposed to the allies of the Emir Beshir. In order to keep them in check, Ibrahim Pasha armed the Maronites, while the Turks instigated the Druses to revolt against the Egyptians, and the allies of Turkey supplied them with arms for this purpose. When the final struggle between the Turks and Egyptians culminated in the defeat of the latter, owing to the assistance rendered to the Sultan by England, the Emir Beshir, who had remained faithful to the Egyptians, was captured and sent as a prisoner to Malta in an English man-of-war. After this the Maronites and Druses took to murdering each other, which they continued to do with more or less energy until 1860, when the great massacres took place, and caused that intervention on the part of the Western Powers which resulted in the administrative autonomy of the Lebanon, and in the arrangement which has secured to this once turbulent region twenty years of comparative peace and prosperity. It was in the palmy days of the Emir Beshir's rule that he built the palace of Beteddin, which, however, he only occupied for a few years after its completion, and soon after his capture it began to fall into disrepair. His widow had no

funds to keep it in order, and it was bought not very long ago by the Turkish Government, and converted into the residence of the Governor-General. The beautiful decorations in some of the rooms prove the Emir Beshir to have been a man of taste. The marble carvings of the wainscotings are most elaborate and highly finished, bordered with Arabesques and mosaic-work; while the ceilings are supported by light, graceful columns. At one end of the garden, cypresses and weeping-willows indicate the spot where the first wife of the Emir lies buried; and near it is the Turkish bath, all in marble, now out of repair, but equal in decoration to anything of the kind to be found elsewhere. The garden and terraces command a magnificent view of the broad winding valley, clothed with wood or terraced with vineyards. The extensive stables under the palace would afford luxurious accommodation for a whole cavalry regiment, though at present they are only occupied by about fifty dragoons. All the military accoutrements are home made; and I saw some tailors actively at work on sewing-machines in the store department, which also contained the arms and ammunition for the force. It was a pleasure to be in a country where life and property are protected by the people themselves. The hateful Kurdish zaptieh and lawless Bashi-Bazouk are here unknown. All the mounted police are furnished by the Lebanon itself, are properly paid, and kept in

strict discipline by the present Governor-General. The taxes are so very much too light that the Lebanon is a financial burden to the Porte. The method of their collection is regulated by the conditions of "the settlements" arrived at after the massacres; the people are thus spared the infliction of the two curses of Turkish rule—the foreign policeman and the tax-gatherer.

On the top of the ridge behind Beteddin lies the small plain upon which the battle between the Emir Beshir and the Sheikh Beshir was fought. Here we were met by a deputation of horsemen from Mukhtara, led by the young Sheikh Nejib Jumbelât, the eldest grandson of the Sheikh Beshir, and consequently the head of the family. He was a good-looking young man, mounted on a handsome Arab gorgeously caparisoned; but he apologised for the steeds of his retainers, as he said the best horses at this season of the year were all out at grass. This, however, did not prevent one of them from executing an equestrian "fantasia" on the battle-plain, to the great admiration of the rest of the company, as he was celebrated for his skill in horsemanship. Dashing forward at full gallop, he made his long lance whirl rapidly round the neck of his horse and his own body, till it spun like a Catherine wheel; then he twisted it with surprising rapidity round his own neck; then made it spin sideways, first on his right side and then on his left, keeping

his horse meanwhile in full career, while both hands were more or less engaged in performing these feats with the lance, which he only once dropped in an effort to surpass himself. Some of these men are extremely expert in playing the *jereed*, and the game sometimes waxes earnest as hard knocks are given and received; but unfortunately they were not sufficiently well mounted to exhibit their skill and prowess on this occasion.

We now descended into another, and if possible more richly cultivated, valley than either of those we had already traversed, and the view from the top of the ridge before we commenced the descent was so striking as to compel a halt. At our feet, embedded in foliage and situated on the angle of a bold promontory, formed by the confluence of the two streams Awati and Kharabeh, stood the palace of Mukhtara, more imposing for situation and more picturesque in its architecture than even Beteddin. Away to the right, its pointed crest, streaked with snow, towering among the clouds to a height of 6100 feet, rose the lofty Tomat Niha; and on the plateau, about half-way up the mountain, lay the town of Yezzin. It is situated on the edge of a cliff, over which the stream which supplies the town with water precipitates itself in a fall of 150 feet. We could see the thin white streak in the distance as it foamed down to join the Awati. This river, which is the ancient Bostrenus, falls into the sea about a mile to

the north of Sidon. At its confluence with the Yezzin brook stand four columns of Egyptian granite, four feet thick and thirteen feet high, probably Phœnician. The main range of the Lebanon, averaging from 5000 to 6000 feet in height, dotted here and there with stumps of fir or cedar, but otherwise rugged and barren, closed the prospect immediately in front of us. The whole view was gloriously illuminated by the setting sun; and the tinted roofs and white balconies of Mukhtara, crowded with spectators in anticipation of our arrival, with its tributary villages nestling amid luxuriant foliage, gave an air of comfort and civilisation to the scene, which contrasted most agreeably with the desolate-looking range behind. After a short and steep descent we reached the village of Jedeideh, where the whole population turned out and lined the roadside, welcoming us with low salutations; and then from the opposite side of the valley burst upon our ears the strange wild cadence of hundreds of voices chanting the song of welcome. Plunging down into the gorge, thickly wooded with oaks, poplars, and chestnut-trees, we crossed the rushing torrent by a picturesque bridge; but its roar failed to deaden the chorus which was now approaching, as groups of men, singing and clapping their hands frantically, came crowding down to welcome us. As we wound up the zigzag path leading to the palace the scene became more and more dramatic in its effects. First herald-

ing us with their triumphant shouts, as with the agility of mountaineers they sprang up the steep hillside, went the footmen; then came the cavalcade with sword and spear and flowing robes of bright colours; and now groups of women in white veils, with only one eye exposed, came trooping down the village paths, to swell the procession and add their shrill greetings. When the piercing *zalghoot* bursts from some hundreds of female throats for the first time, one's immediate impression is that all the women in the place are being beaten by their husbands, for it ends in a kind of wail, hardly expressive of joy or triumph; but it acts upon the nerves of the men as the pibroch of a bagpipe does upon a Highlander, only, doubtless, far more effectively; and, indeed, these Druses are accustomed to be stimulated very much, not merely by the voices, but by the eye of beauty. It is true it is only one eye—a Druse woman never shows more than one eye—but probably from the fact that the rest of the face has to be judged by this single orb, they throw more expression into it than the Western female can concentrate in two; at all events, these Druse women certainly do play a very much more active part in affairs generally than women who hide their faces do elsewhere. No sooner did they set up their shrill screams than the men began to sing more madly, and clap their hands and fire off guns more wildly. As we passed beneath latticed windows more women

looked out, and sprinkled rose-water over us, and made long shrill speeches to us, which I could not understand, but which I am told consisted of blessings and praises; and a boy came and poured coffee under our horses' feet as a special mark of honour and respect;—and so at last, half stunned with noise, we arrived under the lofty walls of Mukhtara.

Built against the steep hill, Mukhtara has a façade five storeys high, with curious projecting stone staircases, ascending from one storey to the other on the outside, and a terrace and fountains on the fourth storey, where light graceful columns support the blue-domed roofs, and where a large crowd was now gathered, while the women were clustered like flies upon the balconies and stairs. Here we were met by the second brother, Nessib Bey, and conducted up to the terrace, where all the most distinguished neighbours were gathered, and where we were shown our sleeping apartments, and the preparations which had been made for our accommodation. On two sides of the large quadrangular terrace were reception and dining rooms; in the centre of each was a fountain of the clearest water. On the third side were the sleeping apartments; while the fourth was open, and from its lofty elevation commanded a splendid view of the wild yet fertile valley. This court was surrounded by light columns, and in the centre of it was another fountain. We

sat down to dinner, a party of fourteen. Besides the two brothers Jumbelât were several of the principal family retainers, and the spiritual chief of the Druses. To me this was the most interesting personage present;—a man of not more than forty years of age, he is looked up to by the whole nation for his sagacity and personal piety. He was a silent, reserved man, of unusually dark complexion, a thoughtful brow, and extremely soft eye and gentle expression. There was a dignified repose of manner, a perfect self-possession, and, withal, a keenness of intelligence in his bearing, which were well calculated to impose respect. Although he had been only recently appointed to fill the important position he occupied, he had already won golden opinions; and the fact that he owed his nomination chiefly to the influence of our own Consul-General illustrates in a striking manner the exceptional position which England occupies among the Druses. When the occupant of this high office enjoys the respect and esteem of the nation, his authority among them becomes almost paramount; and it is important, therefore, that his personal relations with the chief British political authority should be of a cordial nature. Though enjoying the highest consideration among the chief families of the Druses, it is not necessary that their religious head should be himself noble; on the contrary, this man's father, who had wielded immense influence in the same capacity, was of humble origin.

He was universally beloved and regretted, having recently died at a great age. So far as I could judge, his son seemed likely to prove a most worthy successor. Though the appointments of the dinner-table were European, the repast itself was thoroughly characteristic. After soup came a whole sheep, stuffed with rice and seeds from the cone of the pine (it had been boiled in *leben*, or sour milk); then there was *couscoussu*, or stuffed cucumbers; then egg-plant, also *farci;* with other preparations of meat and vegetables—all very palatable—and an excellent pudding. I observed that the sweet part of the repast seemed the most popular among the natives, who possessed a great capacity for disposing of it. After dinner came toasts, and the health of the Queen and the Consul-General, and prosperity to the family of Jumbelât was drunk. The wife of the eldest son was at the moment in an interesting condition, and the hopes of the family were centred on the result. She had already had six children—four girls and two boys; but both the boys had died, and the family was without an heir. The anxiety of the whole neighbourhood was intense on the subject. I therefore ventured to propose as a toast the health of the lady; and as I did not see that there was any reason why one should not drink to the health of a child not yet born, I coupled with it that of the infant. Perhaps it was somewhat premature to anticipate the sex, but I felt that

the exigencies of the occasion required it,—and so we drank to the future son and heir. I am happy to say that we were fully justified in so doing by the result. When we went back into the court-yard we found that it was brilliantly illuminated with coloured lanterns. The neighbouring villages had responded to the display, and numerous lights twinkled among the foliage on the hillsides; while bonfires were lighted on their summits, to which we replied with a display of rockets.

Some more notables had arrived during dinner, and we found that a sort of *levée* was still to be held before we could seek repose. Over coffee and *narghilés* we listened to their professions of devotion to England and to the Jumbelât family. They were profuse in their expressions of esteem for Mr Eldridge, our Consul-General, and gratitude to him for the protection he had accorded, and the benefits he had been able to confer upon the house of Jumbelât; and they seemed most anxious to impress upon me, as a stranger, the great power and influence in the Lebanon of my hosts. Indeed, the Jumbelâts appear to occupy among the Druses very much the same position that the MacCallum More did in old time among the clans in the Highlands, and, like the Campbells, they have their rivals and enemies, and lose no occasion to strengthen themselves politically. They enjoy the special protection of England ever since Lord Dufferin rescued

the family from beggary and ruin. The two brothers were then children; the once magnificent property of their grandfather, the Sheikh Beshir, had, as I have already described, been confiscated; and after the massacres, the family seemed in a fair way to become altogether extinguished, when our High Commissioner took compassion upon them, and succeeded in recovering some of their property, placing the lads under the special guardianship of the Consul-General. From that time their affairs have been managed, and the young men themselves have been brought up, more or less under British supervision. They are now once more one of the wealthiest, if not the wealthiest, family in the Lebanon; and as they feel they owe it all to England, their devotion and gratitude are unbounded, and this sentiment extends naturally throughout the whole district, in which their influence is supreme. This accounts for the extreme cordiality of our reception, and for the warm demonstrations of goodwill of which we were the objects. In an interesting conversation which I had with the spiritual chief, he assured me that the Druses of the Hauran, together with those of the Lebanon, were one in sentiment; that they all acknowledged him as their religious superior; that in the Hauran they were as devoted to England as they are in the Lebanon, and that at any moment that the Queen gave the word, they were ready to turn out 25,000 fighting men who would go to war

for her in any cause. Since 1860 a large emigration has taken place from the Lebanon to the Hauran, and it is estimated that the Druse population of "The Mountain" is now not above 13,000, while the Hauran contains about 50,000. Altogether the Druse nation numbers probably between 70,000 and 80,000 souls, and constant communication is kept up between the two parts of the country in which they are settled. The day may come when it may be well to remember that we have a warlike people in Syria absolutely devoted to us, and only longing to prove that devotion in acts. No doubt they believe that they would derive ultimate advantage from a cordial co-operation with England. All alliances are, in fact, based on this anticipation; but there are degrees of loyalty and degrees of fighting capacity, and England may look far before she would find a recruiting-ground which could furnish so brave and loyal a contingent as the country of the Druses. So firmly are they penetrated with the closeness of their relations to England, that I was surprised to find how many knew a little English, that language being the only foreign tongue they ever learn. The brothers Jumbelât spoke and wrote it with ease.

The family now own about twenty villages, and can put into the field from five to six thousand fighting men. I was astonished to learn that about half their tenants and retainers were Christians.

They were not to be distinguished from Druses except by the absence of the white turban, and joined in the manifestations of joy as heartily as the Druses themselves. One of the brothers told me that they were careful to make no distinction between Christians and Druses in their treatment of them—that they all lived most harmoniously together; and certainly, so far as demonstration went, the popularity of the family seemed unbounded among their own followers, whether Druse or Christian.

After the *levée* was over, the mother of our hosts came to pay us a visit. Indeed she was really our hostess, and controlled the affairs of the family. To her tact and ability, aided by British assistance, is largely due the restoration of its fallen fortunes; and it was easy to perceive, after a few moments' conversation, that she was by no means an ordinary person. She was dressed in Druse costume, cut away exceedingly in front—her ample bosom concealed by a gauze under-garment, and on her head a veil, one corner of which she held before her mouth, but evidently more from habit than from any real desire to conceal her features, her age and long intimacy with the Consul-General rendering her somewhat indifferent in this respect. In her expressions of welcome and solicitude about our comfort, she did the honours as one accustomed to rule, and was *grande dame jusqu'au bout des ongles.*

After the fatigue and excitement of so long a

day, I was not sorry when at last the moment came for retiring to rest, though, as it turned out, that rest was destined to be of short duration; for at about two o'clock in the morning I was awoke by a shrill scream, apparently from a room in the immediate neighbourhood, which made me start in alarm lest some dreadful catastrophe had occurred. It was followed by another and another, and in a moment I recognised that it was the *zalghoot*. I at once inferred that the expected event had occurred, and that it was a boy! Not for the birth of any female infant would the Druse women have set up such a scream of rejoicing: a girl indeed would have been considered a profound misfortune, and the congratulations which we were prepared to shower upon the head of the happy father would in that case have been converted into condolences. It was evident there was to be no more sleep for any one that night—such a bustle, and a hurrying to and fro, and shrill screaming went on until dawn, when enthusiastic clansmen began firing off guns under the young mother's window, just at the moment when she most needed quiet. So as sleep was no longer possible, I rose with the first peep of day, to see how the birth of a young Druse chief was celebrated in the heart of the Lebanon. To the left of the terrace, and thirty or forty feet below it, was a court through which flowed a stream of sparkling water into a square cistern, near which stood two

or three handsome trees. The roofs of the buildings which enclosed this court were crowded even at this early hour with women, who were looking down and screaming their applause at the picturesque groups as they came trooping in, firing their guns and waving them in the air, to join in the dance of triumph. In the centre of the court the crowd had formed a circle, and in the midst of it danced a lithe active figure in bright attire, who, waving his drawn sword in one hand and the scabbard in the other, was performing a sort of war-dance to the music of loud singing and clapping of hands, accompanied by squealing pipes, and drums made after the fashion of Indian tom-toms. Every now and then men rushed out of the crowd and fired their guns into the tank. Sometimes the volleys poured into the water literally lashed it into foam. What with the loud chanting, the discordant music, the perpetual firing, the clapping of hands, and the screaming of women, the clamour became almost deafening. All this time, as the more distant villages sent in their contingents, each led by its headman, the crowd kept increasing and the hubbub waxing louder. More circles were formed, in some of which two performers danced and went through a sort of mock combat, changing their step and the measure of their sword-cuts with the time of the music, which itself changed as the village poets arrived and circulated scraps of paper on which were written songs appropriate to the occasion.

Seated on the ground as spectators were the Ukkul or "initated," and the Uwhahid who aspire to a still greater degree of sanctity. The Druse is always to be distinguished by the white turban wound round his *tarboosh* or fez; but the learned in the mysteries of their religion wear, in addition to this, an *abeih* or wide-sleeved cloak with black and white stripes. They were too grave and reverend seigniors to take any more active part in the festivities than that of silent and approving spectators. They abstain from excesses of any kind, never taste wine or tobacco, and preserve a severe and sedate deportment upon upon all occasions. In conversation they never use a bad word, or oath, or even an expression which the most fastidious taste of the country does not pronounce to be perfectly proper. Indeed, all the Druse men are distinguished for their abstemiousness and moderation, as their women are remarkable for their virtue; and although upon this occasion the festivities were kept up until the evening, and must have been participated in by about two thousand persons of both sexes, there was no unseemly boisterousness or excess of any kind, nor, so far as I know, was any beverage stronger than coffee provided by the munificent hosts who had during the day to feed this immense crowd. Mutton and rice were the staple articles of diet, and I am afraid to say how many sheep were killed and how much rice was consumed. After the novelty of the scene had worn

off, it must be admitted that the dancing became somewhat monotonous, and the noise wearisome and confusing. I thought of the poor sick woman in whose honour it was all done, and contrasted these deafening demonstrations with the straw-strewn street which insures quiet to the London fashionable patient under similiar circumstances.

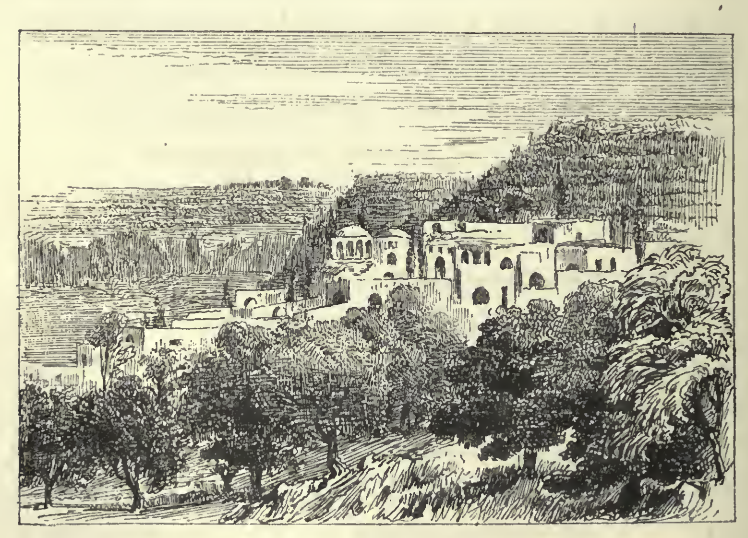
Once the performances were varied by a sort of burlesque, and a group of men and women, preceded by capering men fantastically dressed, and performing on pipes and drums, appeared. Some of the men were disguised as women,—one especially represented a bride, and another a decrepit old hag. The latter, nearly bent double, carried a basket and a knife, while from her forehead projected the Druse horn—a part of female attire which has now entirely fallen into disuse. She was supposed to be an allegorical representation of "the past;" "the present" was symbolised by the handsome young bride, who, attended by one of her maidens—also a youth in girl's attire—proceeded to execute a fantasia not unlike a nautch-dance in the middle of the group, while the old woman kept getting in the way, digging up roots with her knife and putting them in her basket, performing various sly antics all the while, and keeping the spectators in a high state of merriment, the more especially when she and a man dressed as a buffoon had a passage of arms in which the latter got decidedly the worst of it. The women, who were looking on from the balconies of the pal-

ace and the neighbouring roofs, seemed especially to enjoy the fun, and in their excitement occasionally afforded me a glimpse of the other eye. Indeed, I had more than once an opportunity of seeing a remarkably pretty face; but as a rule, the Druse women veil their beauty more jealously than Turkish women, while in other respects they seem to take a far more active share in the affairs of life, and to enjoy a considerable amount of independence. On the other hand, divorce consists in the simple formality of a man saying to his wife that she had better go back to her mother. After this has been repeated three times, she has nothing for it but to return to the bosom of her family—a custom which it is evident must serve as a wholesome check upon mothers-in-law. Considering the great facility of the operation, it is much to the credit of the Druses that divorce among them is not so common as it would be if they were English, and had to apply to a judge for it.

In the eyes of our venerable hostess and her two sons our visit seemed quite an auspicious event: it had served as a sort of signal for the appearance of the long-wished-for son and heir. In consequence of the confidence with which I had proposed his health the night before, I think I was suspected of having exercised some sort of occult influence, and enjoyed a corresponding amount of consideration. At all events, I had the privilege of seeing not only the old lady and heaping upon her my congratulations, but a young married daughter, who was dressed in

European costume, and whose veil was not too thick or jealously worn to conceal her fair features.

I tried, later on in the day, to get my friend the spiritual chief into a quiet corner, and converse with him on the subject of his religion. But I found the one task as hopeless as the other. The noise penetrated everywhere, but the holy man was impenetrable, and skilfully evaded all approach to the mysterious topic, so I was forced to have recourse to other sources of information; and I am chiefly indebted to Dr Wortabet of Beyrout, who formed one of our party to Mukhtara, to Captain Phibbs, and to Mr Chirol, with whom I afterwards travelled in the country of the Maronites, for the particulars contained in the following chapter in regard to the particular character of Druse theology.



MUKHTARA.

CHAPTER XIV.

ORIGIN OF THE DRUSE RELIGION—THE IMAUMAT—CONNECTION OF DRUSE THEOLOGY WITH CHINA—THE ORIGIN OF EVIL—THE TRANSMIGRATION OF SOULS—DIVINE MANIFESTATIONS—DRUSE VIEW OF CHRIST—THE FOUR MINISTERS OF TRUTH—THE DAY OF JUDGMENT—CEREMONY OF INITIATION—SECRET ORGANISATION—DRUSE WOMEN—AIN MATUR.

In the preface to the Baron Silvestre de Sacy's book on the Druse Religion, which was published in 1839, he tells us that it was written forty years prior to that date, but that he deferred publishing it in the hope of receiving from the East fresh Druse MSS. which might throw further light upon their doctrines. This hope not having been realised, he finally decided to publish the only elaborate account which exists of their religion, and which is, consequently, more than eighty years old. He derived his information principally from the four volumes of Hamza's treatise on the Unity of God in the National Library in Paris; besides which, he refers to some MSS. which are in the Vatican, and in the Bodleian Library at Oxford.

During the wars waged by Ibrahim Pasha and

the Maronites against the Druses in the years 1837-1842, and more especially during the massacres of 1860, some more of their sacred books have come to light, which have been carefully studied and analysed by Dr Wortabet, whose thorough knowledge of Arabic admirably fitted him for the task, and a *résumé* of their contents was published by him in a work now out of print.[1] It is supposed that with this addition to the exhaustive and elaborate treatise of De Sacy, which fills two volumes, we are in possession of the whole body of that Druse theology which has been so carefully guarded for so many years from profane investigation. Mr Chirol, however, from a study of the influences under which their religion was evolved, and from hints which he succeeded in obtaining from conversation with initiated Druses, is of opinion that their theology contains arcana which are only dimly shadowed forth in the outward expression of them contained in the sacred books; and that the latter possess an internal meaning, similar to that with which Swedenborg has invested the Bible, known only to the Uwhahid, who themselves belong to a grade of initiated superior to the Ukkul. And this is the more probable, because one of the fundamental dogmas of the founders of the heretical sects was the allegorisation of the Koran, which is called Taweel, or the interpretation, in contradistinction to Tanzeel, or descent, which is

[1] Researches into the Religions of Syria.

used for the literal meaning of the words of the Koran. Religion, according to this teaching, did not consist in external observances (viz., "Zakir," or "the outward"), but in the internal feeling ("il Batin," or "the inward"); hence the numerous sects which pretended to the knowledge of the inner meaning of the Koran were called "Batineel." The Metawalies of the present day take their name from their belief in the "Taweel." It is said that this inner meaning pertains to the Bible, and to all sacred books; and therefore, as no doubt their own sacred books are included, no one who is not a Uwhahid, even though he be in possession of the whole body of Druse theology, can know its hidden mysteries.

The history of the origin of the Druse religion seems to be pretty well ascertained. When Ebn Saba, whom Makrizi and other writers suppose to have been of the Jewish race, and who lived in the first century of the Hegira, promulgated the doctrine that Mohammed had left the Imaumat to his son-in-law Ali, the husband of Fatima, he found in Persia a population whose previous theological tendencies were essentially of an esoteric character. Accordingly, out of the great Shiite sect which then arose, and which has since divided Islam with the Sunnis, numerous mystical sects sprang into existence, all turning more or less upon the question of Imaumat succession. For it was held, very much upon the principle which characterises the Christian dogma of

apostolic succession, that the divine attributes attaching to the Imaumat could only descend through a direct succession of Imaums. This doctrine naturally suggested, later on, interminable and complicated questions of pedigree, upon which the succession depended, of which the most prominent were: the occult infusion of divinity into Imaums; their disappearance from objective vision; the existence of latent or silent Imaums; the transmigration of souls; the allegorical interpretation of the Koran and other sacred books; and the reappearance upon earth of the Imaum, in whom the Deity would finally descend, without, however, being thereby incarnated; for these sects held the Sabian doctrine, as explained by Shehrestani, "that there is a descent of the divine essence, or a descent of the Deity, and a partial descent, or a descent of a portion of His essence, according to the degree of preparedness of the person." The second and third centuries after the Hegira were consequently prolific with Batineel sects, of which the most prominent were the Motazales, the Carmathians, and the Djamis, which were all more or less pervaded with these mystical dogmas, of which the Ismailians, the Ansariyeh, and the Druses are the best known modern representatives.

The actual founder of the Druse sect, who is now adored by them as the last and most perfect of the ten manifestations of the Deity in human form, was one of the Fatimite Khalifs of Egypt, so called on ac-

count of their pretended descent from Fatima, the wife of Ali and daughter of Mohammed. The Fatimite Khalifs were Ismailians, or followers of Ismail, the son of Jaafer the Just, the sixth Imaum, who died A.D. 765, leaving Moussa, his second son, as his heir and successor,—Ismail, the eldest son, having predeceased him; but many of the sheikhs refused to recognise Moussa, declaring that the Imaumat could only pass to the eldest son. Moussa was finally assassinated in A.D. 799 by the Khalif Haroun al Raschid. The Druses, the Ismailians (or Assassins during the time of the Crusades), and the Ansariyeh, are all followers of Ismail; but it was not till two hundred years after his death that the Druses became a distinct sect. At that time, or at the close of the tenth century, there reigned in Egypt a certain Khalif called Hakim the Strong, who declared himself to be a manifestation of the invisible Imaum, and to be as God upon the earth; basing his pretensions on the fact that he was a descendant of Abdullah Ibn Maimun, who had successfully assumed the part of the deceased Ismail, on the theory that the Imaumat was never extinguished, but at times latent in the persons of various providential representatives. His pretensions were supported by a Persian emigrant then in Cairo, named Mohammed Ben Ismail el Durzi; indeed they were inspired by him, and were afterwards adopted by a man of remarkable ability, a certain Hamza-ibn-Ali, surnamed Al-Hadi, or the director,

who was the chief author of their sacred books. Hamza, in fact, claimed all the credit of the discovery of the divine character of Hakim, and soon acquired a complete ascendancy over the mind of that prince, who was in reality a monster of depravity, and his pretensions were naturally considered blasphemous by his Moslem subjects. To meet the opposition which they excited, he did his utmost, at the instigation of Hamza, to curry favour both with Christians and Jews; and, in order to win them to a recognition of his claims to being the Messiah whom they expected, granted them complete religious liberty, and many other privileges.

Durzi meantime was first discredited, then reported to have been murdered, and finally, with the connivance of Hakim, who probably felt that he owed him a debt of gratitude, succeeded in escaping to Syria, where he established himself on the western slopes of Hermon near Hasbeya, and began to preach the new faith. Within a mile and a half of the town is the Khalwet el Biyad, considered to this day the central shrine of the sect, from which, in 1838, the sacred books once preserved there were carried off by the Egyptians. His doctrines were at once accepted by the inhabitants, who carried them to their comrades in the Lebanon, who were thenceforward known as Druses, or followers of Durzi. He was afterwards excommunicated, and enjoys no credit among the Druses, though his name still remains;

but Soloman, another Persian who followed him to Syria, and became a teacher among them, is still held in much honour.

The nation or tribe, whichever it may have been, that accepted the doctrines of Hakim, had not long previously arrived from the north of Syria, chiefly from the Jebel-el-Ala, near Aleppo, where some still remained, and a quarter of the city is actually called to this day the Hana Jumbelât, after the family with whom I was now staying. They had, no doubt, become strongly tainted with the Ismailian doctrines prevalent in these parts, and were therefore predisposed to receive the teaching of El Durzi. Hakim, whose cruelty and ferocity amounted to insanity, was finally murdered by his subjects, whom his crimes had driven to desperation. According to the Druses, however, who deny his notoriously bad character, he did not die, but was translated, and his soul went to China, whither it has since been followed by the souls of all pious Druses, who are supposed to be occupying in large numbers certain cities in the west of China, and preparing for the great event which the Druses believe to be now impending.

This connection of their theology with China is probably due to the affinity which seems to exist between the esoteric side of Buddhism[1] and that of the Druse religion, the fundamental principle of

[1] In Benjamin of Tudela's book of travels, there is a curious notice of Druses having been met with in Ceylon.

which would appear to be an enlightened and spiritual pantheism — all things created being emanations from the Deity, tending through the influence of sin towards imperfection, but which, by the moral necessity for the final triumph of goodwill, gradually reascend by a process of regeneration, until all things will become absorbed in and identified with the divine nature. The similarity of this doctrine with the teaching of Sakya Muni will at once be recognised; indeed there can be little doubt that the Magians and Sabians of Persia were impregnated with Buddhist mysticism as well as with the teaching of the Zend-Avesta, for we have records of a Chinaman resident in Balkh in the sixth century who translated some of the sacred books of Buddha into Arabic. Taylor says that the Shiite notion of an Imaum (which the Druses share) "is precisely the same as that which the Thibetians form of their Grand Lama, and the Burmese of their Bodhisawatas."[1] It was probably some doctrinal connection of this sort which induced the Mystics, who came from Persia to Egypt, and who founded the Druse sect, to propagate the belief, firmly rooted in the minds of the Druses, that in a latent or veiled way all Chinamen, unconsciously to themselves, are internally Druses.

The oneness and pervasiveness of the Deity is the prominent feature of the Druse religion. Believing that God is everything, and that nothing

[1] Taylor's History of Mohammedanism, p. 192.

exists which is not Him, their idea of the highest degree of perfection in religion is a mystical absorption of the thinking and feeling powers of man in the unity of God. Hence they call their religion Unitarianism, and its followers Muwahadeen or Unitarians. It grapples boldly with the problem of creation and the origin of evil; the theory being that the Deity created from His own essence of Light an intelligent principle or being, who is called the Universal Mind. The complacency with which the Universal Mind, being a free moral agent, regarded himself, constituted a sin, and hence there emanated from him the opposite principle to Light, and the Darkness thus evolved became also a free moral agent, known as "the Antagonist." This was evidently derived from the Carmathian theory, in which Yezdan, the principle of Light, thinks within himself, "If I had an antagonist, how would it be? This thought was evil, and unsuitable to the nature of light, and darkness was the result of this thought, which was called Ahriman."[1] Both the Carmathian and Druse theories have evidently had their origin in the old Persian religion, in which the beings or principles of Ormuzd and Ahriman represent Light and Beneficence and Darkness and Malignity respectively. In order to assist the Universal Mind in the struggle which now took place between the principles of Light and Darkness, God evolved from them the Universal Soul, which sided with the Universal Mind.

[1] El Shehristani on Religions and Sects.

and seems to have represented the feminine principle; for the Soul, being acted upon by the Mind and the Antagonist, brought forth "the Foundation," who afterwards became the companion of the Antagonist, and took the part of Evil against Good. The Soul now conceived again and brought forth "the Eternal Word." From the Word emanated "the Preceder," in whose component parts the light prevailed over the darkness; and from the Preceder came "the Succeeder." These five—the Universal Mind, the Universal Soul, the Word, the Preceder, and the Succeeder—became the Ministers of Truth, and the Antagonist and the Foundation the Ministers of Error. Human souls having, like the Word, been conceived through the impregnation of the Universal Soul by the Mind and the Antagonist, are composed of the conflicting elements of light and darkness, or good and evil. They are immortal, and never suffer any change in their essence, nor are they capable of such change. They are exactly the same as to their personal identity and number as they were at the first period of their creation, but keep in a perpetual state of transmigration from one body to another. Indeed the final creations in the department of matter were human bodies to serve as tenements for souls, which were created in the various stages and forms of development and organisation that they appear in at the present time. "Thus all at once the world was populated with infants and

grown-up persons of all ages and sexes and ranks in life, residing in various countries, speaking different languages, occupied with arts, sciences, and every other pursuit which attracts the attention of man."[1] The idea that the human race originated from a primal pair the Druses ridicule as an absurdity. Their theory as to the creation of matter, generally through the action of the male and female principles of light and heat, is too elaborate and recondite to enter upon here. The arguments upon which they base their belief in the transmigration of souls are so curious that they are worth quoting. Many, they say, are born to a life of doomed suffering and misery, while others enjoy an opposite condition of health, affluence, and happiness. Now this cannot be consistent with the goodness and justice of God, unless on the supposition that their moral actions during the migration in a previous body had been such as to necessitate the present dealings of God with them. In arguing this point with Christians, they produce two passages from the New Testament which, in their opinion, conclusively prove it. The first is where the Saviour said that John the Baptist was Elijah. The second is the inquiry of the disciples, with regard to the man who had been born blind, whether he had sinned or his parents ; for if *he* had sinned, so as to have been born blind, he must have been in a previous body. It is affirmed that

[1] Wortabet's Researches, &c.

instances are not wanting in which a person among them is conscious of the connections and circumstances which had been his lot in a former body, and that these professions in some cases have been thoroughly tested and found to be true. Dr Wortabet relates the following incident as one among many others of the kind which are current among the Druses: A child, five years old, in Djebel el A'ala, complained of the life of poverty which his parents led, and alleged that he had been a rich man in Damascus; that on his death he was born in another place, but lived only six months; that he was born again among his present friends, and desired to be carried to that city. He was taken there by his relatives, and on the way astonished them by his correct knowledge of the names of the different places which they passed. On reaching the city, he led the way through the various streets to a house which he said had been his own. He knocked, and called the woman of the house by her name; and on being admitted, told her that he had been her husband, and asked after the welfare of the several children, relatives, and acquaintances whom he had left. The Druses of the place soon met to inquire into the truth of the matter. The child gave them a full account of his past life among them, of the names of his acquaintances, the property which he had possessed, and the debts which he had left. All was found to be strictly true, except a small sum

which he said a certain weaver owed him. The man was called, and on the claim being mentioned to him he acknowledged it, pleading his poverty for not having paid it to the children of the deceased. The child then asked the woman who had been his wife whether she had found a sum of money which he had hid in the cellar; and on her replying in the negative, he went directly to the place, dug up the treasure, and counted it before them. The money was found to be exactly of the amount and kind of specie which he had specified. His wife and children, who had become considerably older than himself, then gave him some money, and he returned with his new friends to his mountain home. The Druses differ from the Ansariyeh in believing that souls only migrate into human bodies, while the latter hold with the Manicheans that wicked souls pass into the forms of brutes.

The most prominent and interesting feature of the Druse religion, however, is the belief which they hold in common with kindred sects, in the constant recurrence of divine and ministerial manifestations. Before the appearance of Adam, according to their theory, the world had existed for many thousands of years; the Deity and the Antagonist had both manifested themselves upon it, and had disappeared, the one leaving seven Ministers of Truth, and the other seven Ministers of Error. The latter having taught error under the guise of truth, the Ministers of Truth

were obliged to adopt their nomothetical laws outwardly, while secretly they understood them only in an allegorical sense. It became necessary, therefore, that God should manifest Himself a second time, which he did in the human form of Adam. This manifestation continued a thousand years, and was followed by many others. The design of these incarnations was a gracious condescension on the part of God to meet the frailty of man, who is incapable of beholding the transcendent glory of the essence of the Divinity. Their number is said to have been ten greater, and sixty-nine minor manifestations. After each greater manifestation there were seven religions; after each religion, there were seven ministers; and the mission of each minister continued one hundred thousand years. After the second greater manifestation, in the form of Enoch, the "Word" appeared, who left, again, seven ministers of truth, they being succeeded by seven teachers, whose names were Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus, Mohammed, another Mohammed, and Said. These are all manifestations of the Antagonist. Their religions, literally understood, are false, but interpreted allegorically are true; and hence the true believers have adopted them outwardly during the prevalence of each. This curious idea is illustrated by the following extract from the Catechism of the Druses, quoted by Dr Wortabet, in regard to what they hold concerning Jesus and His religion:[1]

[1] The following is the appreciation of De Sacy, with respect to

"*Q.* What do we say concerning the Gospel which Christians hold?

"*A.* That it is true, for it is the sayings of the Lord Christ, who was Salman el Pharisy during the life of Mohammed, and who is Hamza the son of Ali—not the false Christ, who was born of Mary, for he was the son of Joseph.

"*Q.* Where was the true Christ when the false Christ was with the disciples?

"*A.* He was among the disciples. He uttered the truths of the Gospel, and taught Christ the son of Joseph the institutes of the Christian religion; but when Jesus disobeyed the true Christ, He put

divine manifestations, and especially to the person of Hakim. There results, it seems to me from these statements, that the divine humanity of the Deity was one and always the same in His different manifestations, although He appeared under different forms; that the Deity and the human form which serves Him as a veil, are so united, that the actions and words of the form are truly the actions and words of the Deity; that the merit of faith consists in believing that the Deity, in rendering Himself accessible to sense by the form which serves Him as a veil, does not cease to be infinite, incomprehensible, inaccessible to the senses. First, that notwithstanding the diversity and the successions of His manifestations there is in respect of Him, neither succession of time, nor any numbers; that the divine humanity of the Deity is antecedent to all created things, and is the prototype of the human form; that the manner in which men see Him in the figure with which He clothes Himself, is proportioned to the degree of purity in each; that it was necessary that Divinity should thus manifest itself under a human form that men might be able to acquire a full conviction of His existence, and that the divine justice might recompense those who should have believed, and punish those who should have been incredulous; and lastly, that the last manifestation, under the name of Hakim, is the most perfect—that of which all preceding manifestations were in some sort but the daybreak and the sketch."

hatred into the hearts of the Jews, so that they crucified him.

"*Q.* What became of him after the crucifixion?

"*A.* They put him into a grave, and the true Christ came and stole him, and gave out among men the report that Christ had risen out of the dead.

"*Q.* Why did He act in this manner?

"*A.* That He might establish the Christian religion, and confirm its followers in what He had taught them.

"*Q.* Why did He act in such a manner as to establish error?

"*A.* So that the Unitarians (Druzes) should be concealed in the religion of Jesus, and none of them might be known.

"*Q.* Who was it that came from the grave and entered among the disciples when the doors were shut?

"*A.* The living Christ who is immortal, even Hamza the servant and slave of our Lord.

"*Q.* Who brought the Gospel to light and preached it?

"*A.* Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.

"*Q.* Why did not the Christians acknowledge the unity of God?

"*A.* Because God had not so decreed.

"*Q.* Why does God permit the introduction of evil and infidelity?

"*A.* Because He chooses to mislead some from, and guide others to, the truth.

"*Q.* If infidelity and error proceed from Him, why does He punish those who follow them?

"*A.* Because when He deceived them, they did not obey Him.

"*Q.* How can a deluded man obey, when he is ignorant of the true state of the case?

"*A.* We are not bound to answer this question, for God is not accountable to His creatures for His dealings with them."[1]

During the life of Christ the Druses believe that the real Christ was concealed under the form of Lazarus (the "Mind"), and that the four apostles, as they call Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, were manifestations of the remaining four Ministers of Truth—viz., the Soul, the Word, the Preceder, and the Succeeder. These, after the "Mind," are the noblest of all created beings. During the period of creation, they were spiritual causes; during the period of the nomothetical religions, they were allegorical teachers; during the divine manifestations, they were religious ministers; and at the resurrection, they will be truthful witnesses. The particulars of this latter period, according to Dr Wortabet, are the following:—

"It will be ushered in by war between the Mohammedans and Franks or Christians, in which the

[1] Catechism appended to the book called 'Course of Time.'

former will attempt to or actually burn the Church of the Holy Sepulchre at Jerusalem. The Christians will then seek the help of the king of the Abyssinians, who will then be an incarnation of the Antagonist (or Antichrist), and, in retaliation, march against the Caaba in Mecca. The Mohammedans, to protect the place, will also march to that city, and then, while both the belligerent armies are preparing for a great conflict, sudden news will be brought to them of a mighty army coming from the East against them. This new army will be under the command of the Universal Mind (or the true Christ), and will consist of two millions and five hundred thousand of Chinese Unitarians, divided into five divisions, commanded severally by the four ministers—viz., Matthew, Mark, Luke, John,—and Hamza. The only course left to the Christians and Mohammedans will be to give up the war among themselves, and unitedly to surrender to this new and invincible king. Their kings and princes will therefore carry rich presents, and advance uncovered to the approaching army. Passing the four divisions and their four commanders (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John), they will come up to the division which forms the rear, and which is commanded by Hamza, the Universal Mind (or true Christ). On drawing near to him they will fall prostrate on the ground, and pray that their presents may be graciously received, and they clemently treated. Their presents will be

received, and they will be commanded to walk before him to Mecca. Their arrival at that place will be on Wednesday, the eighth day of the Mohammedan month, Ze el Hadj. The next day will be the day of judgment; and Friday, which, according to Islamic reckoning, will be the day of sacrifice, will be the time appointed for the massacre of the infidels. On Thursday morning, at sunrise, El Hakim will appear in the human form which he had assumed at the last manifestation in Egypt, and, mounted on his white ass, will take his place on the top of the temple El Caaba, carrying a drawn sword of gold. With a loud and terrific voice he will recount the number of his manifestations in the human form, the numberless proclamations which issued by his command, touching his unity and the duty of all to worship him, and the obstinate rejection of them by the infidels. By his command thunders and tornadoes from heaven will descend and demolish the Caaba, and raze its very foundations. The five ministers will then sit in judgment on thrones of gold, studded with the most costly gems, under canopies of the richest silks, bespangled with rubies and pearls. The believers will be graciously received, their sins will be overlooked, and rich presents of clothes, weapons, and horses will be given them. The king of the Abyssinians will be bound by a chain, and carried about the world, until he reach a certain place, where his head will be cut off in a basin of

gold. At the same time, the believers under the four inferior ministers will travel all over the world, killing the infidels, destroying their governments, plundering their treasures and riches. This is the resurrection."

The dates from which the Druses predict the near approach of this important crisis in the world's history are the following: They reckon nine centuries as the time which shall intervene between the last divine manifestation and the day of judgment, and they say, as the woman with child is delivered in the ninth month, so in the ninth century after the incarnation of El Hakim must these things come to pass. Another sign which is recorded in their sacred books is, that the Franks, or Christians, shall outgrow the Mohammedans in strength, and shall prevail over them; and when the superiority of the former shall become evident from the facts and events of history, the end will be near. Now, if it is recollected that we are approaching the end of the ninth century since the last manifestation of Hakim in the year A.D. 1010, and that the late collision between Christendom and Islam has culminated in a war which threatens the Turkish empire with dissolution, and the disastrous consequences of which on Islam generally have yet to be developed, it will be easy to imagine the intense degree of expectation raised by these events in the minds of the Druse nation. The invading wave of Christian influence rolling over the

European provinces of Turkey is already felt in the eastern portion of the Sultan's dominions. It has swept over the Khanates of Central Asia, until it has broken upon the colossal empire of the far East, upon which are centred the hopes of the Druses. Now that Russia has come into collision with China, and we may hear any day of Chinese legions swarming over the extended and imperfectly defended frontiers of Southern Siberia, the predictions of the sacred Druse books seem to them in a fair way of fulfilment, and the Druses are eagerly waiting for an Armageddon in which they believe themselves destined to take a prominent part.[1] They do not, however, arrogate to the Chinese and themselves the exclusive monopoly of their religion, or the benefits that are to flow from it, but hold that large numbers of true believers are disguised by professing false religions in all the kingdoms of the world. At one time they supposed, from the friendly attitude which British officials held towards them, that the whole British nation were Druses; and if they have now given up this hope, they still retain the idea that a considerable body of believers exists among them, who are represented chiefly by the sect known in England as Unitarians. In consequence of this, the whole British nation will enjoy the special favour

[1] Two or three Druse villages in Carmel lie about twelve miles distant from Megiddo, which some suppose to be the Armageddon of the Revelation.

of Hakim. Christianity generally they regard as the religion of the Antagonist, or as being the inversion, under a specious garb, of true Christianity—in other words, as Antichrist.

When a Druse desires to be initiated into his religion, he is required to bind himself solemnly by the following covenant: "I, ——, the son of ——, in sound reason, and with my full consent and preference, do now absolve myself from all sects and religions which contradict the religion of our Lord El Hakim of infinite power, and do acknowledge that there is no adored God in heaven, or existing Lord on earth, except our Lord El Hakim (may his name be praised!). I do give up myself, soul and body, unto him, and undertake to submit to all his orders, and to know nothing but the obedience of our Lord, who appeared in Egypt in the human form. I shall render the homage due to him, and to none else, whether past, present, or expected. I submit to whatever he sees fit to decree respecting me. I shall keep the secrets of my religion, and speak of them to none but Unitarians. If I ever forsake the religion of our Lord, or disobey any of his commands, may I be absolved from the adored Creator, and cut off from the privileges of the ministers; and I shall justly deserve immediate punishment." The rite of induction is performed by the Ukkul, when they simply place the books of wisdom into his hands. The performance of holy ceremonies

of this nature, and the secret religious meetings of the Ukkul, are held every Thursday evening (according to Eastern computation, Friday) in small, square, domed buildings, which may be seen plentifully scattered over the hillsides. These are called *khalwets*, and will accommodate at most thirty or forty persons. To these *séances* women are admitted, according to the injunction of Hamza, who says,—" You should, moreover, instruct your sisters in the faith, but let them be secluded by a partition, and let them not lift up their voices." Nevertheless it is said that many Druse women are very learned, and it is certain that they are not uncommonly very devout, and that the teaching of their religion has a very marked influence not merely in the development of their intelligence, but in the propriety of their lives. The following is a specimen of a Druse prayer:—

" Praise to thee, O Thou whose grace is invisible! Praise to thee, O Thou who hast the best names! Praise to thee, O Thou whose greatness is inimitable! I pray thee, O God, the most generous of hearers, through the five [ministers] and through the three [ministers] who submitted themselves to Thee, to grant me purity of heart, prayer in my tongue, pardon to my end, a sufficiency of righteous provision, and a translation to a pure and holy tabernacle—not to the tabernacle of a wretched infidel. I pray not for a reversal of Thy decrees, but that grace may accompany them. O Thou whose com-

mands none can put away, and whose decrees none can frustrate, Thou art the High, and Thou art the Great!" In these *khalwets* they also chant epic poems. There was one just under the house at which we stayed at Ain Anub on a Thursday evening, and at nightfall I watched for the flicker of a light, and listened for the strains of a hymn — for they sing a millennial anthem, chanting the advent of Hakim and his armies from China, and their triumph over Moslem and Christian unbelievers; but though it was the night of their meeting, neither light nor sound issued from the mysterious little building.

Here also they discuss politics and the interests of the nation. They have secret signs of recognition, and are in fact organised as a powerful political as well as secret society. In order to provide for a universal union of sentiment and action, two or three distinguished *khalwets*, which have constant communication between each other, take the lead by common consent. Of these the principal are the one near Hasbeya, one in the Jebel Druse, and one at Baaklin, the village near which we had passed on our way to Mukhtara. From them information and orders are issued to the minor *khalwets*, and from them the news is spread to the local meetings of every village. This order of proceeding is so well kept up, that in time of war there is a general secret understanding pervading the whole community, from

which a series of acts ensue that are sanctioned by the highest dignitaries of the Druses, and which form an integral part of the general policy adopted by them. This organisation they have already once turned to formidable account, and it may be that they are yet destined to play an important part in the destinies of the country. As brave as they are subtle, skilled in the use of firearms, with a spirit of independence which has never brooked oppression, and which the Turkish Government has sought rather to cajole than to control, loyal to their friends and merciless to their foes, nothing but their inferiority in point of numbers has prevented them from exercising a supreme influence in Syria.

The Druses never engage in trade as a sole means of livelihood, but always have more or less landed property, which they cultivate, and from which they derive their living. The money which they get in exchange for goods, when they have reason to apprehend it was obtained in some improper way, they always exchange with some Christian or Jew. During the whole period of their existence as an independent nation or sect, extending over an epoch of nearly a thousand years, the Druses have only produced one man of real celebrity. This was the Emir Fakr-ed-din, who ruled over the Lebanon in the early part of the seventeenth century. This remarkable man annexed Beyrout and Sidon, threatened Damascus,

and extended his sway as far as the Lake of Tiberias and Mount Carmel, where the Druse villages, which I visited, still exist. He was finally captured by the Turks near Jezzin, brought to Constantinople, and decapitated. Another very singular personality among the Druses was a princess of the house of Ruslan, who last century governed most successfully a part of the Lebanon. She heard and judged cases, sitting behind a curtain, and her decisions gave great satisfaction. This circumstance furnishes a striking illustration of the exceptional position which women occupy among the Druses, of which I had personal evidence in the deference paid to the mother of my hosts.

In *physique* the Druses have nothing in common with the Bedouin Arabs, from whom they are supposed by some to be descended; while others, with far more reason so far as their stature is concerned, consider them to be the modern representatives of the ancient house of Amalek. Polygamy does not exist among them; and as I have before remarked, they are exceedingly jealous and strict in their relations with women. It is doubtless owing to the fact that Druses do not indulge in a plurality of wives, that woman exercises so much more influence in the family than in polygamous countries. Although so carefully veiled, there are no harems in the Turkish sense, and the windows of my bedroom opened on a yard surrounded by kitchens and offices always

crowded with busy, active, and talkative women, doubly fussy in consequence of the important event which had taken place, and evidently controlling matters to their hearts' content. I could even pass through the midst of them without causing that consternation and general stampede which would have been the case had they been Turkish women. In my walks abroad this was still more strikingly the case: instead of that shrinking, cringing manner which the Moslem female thinks fit to exhibit in the presence of a stranger of the other sex—who in fact feels guilty of an impropriety if he dares so much as to address her—the Druse woman boldly talks to him from behind her veil, daringly, and yet not immodestly "fixing" him with her one eye, and evidently much too proud to be a victim to bashfulness or timidity. Strolling alone through the village in the afternoon, to get away from the noise and see a little of the surrounding country, I came upon many groups of females, all in holiday attire, talking and laughing merrily, who, when they saw me, gave a scream of welcome, and then in most winning tones showered blessings upon my country and myself. Now and then one would come forward and present a rosebud, so that I had quite a little bouquet before I had gone very far. They seemed far more anxious to conceal their faces than the upper part of their persons, which the peculiar cut of their costume somewhat lavishly displayed. I soon got

clear of the houses and followed a steep path down to a roaring brook, embowered in foliage, which, later in the day, I ascended to a most enchanting spot, where it tumbled over the rocks from a height of some thirty feet into a cool grotto, which I found was a favourite picnic resort of the Jumbelâts, and where a clear pool formed a tempting bath. Climbing up the steep hill on the other side, amid magnificent chestnut-trees, I came to a spot from which there was a good view of the palace, with its tall cypress and chestnut trees standing boldly out on the shoulder of the hill, and I sat down to sketch it, but was soon surrounded by a group of villagers returning from the *fête*, who would not hear of my going back until I had paid a visit to their village, which turned out to be nearly an hour distant. I was amply repaid, however, by the extreme beauty of the walk, and the hospitality of the reception which I received. They took me to the house of the old sheikh, who was very ill, and, I fear, will never rise from the bed upon which he nevertheless insisted upon receiving me. Here I was regaled with coffee and lemonade, the room soon becoming full of guests; and we made the most laughable struggles to understand each other, the eternal friendship of the English and the Druses being the theme upon which our conversation centred,—for any attempt to get much beyond compliments and expressions of mutual admiration ended in confusion.

Here, too, the women came to the doors, and both they and their hubands insisted that I should keep on paying visits, which, as it would have involved an endless absorption of coffee, I was obliged to decline; but I went up to the flat roof of the highest house and revelled in the glorious prospect. This was the village of Ain Matur, celebrated, as I afterwards heard, for the turbulence and independence of its inhabitants. On more than one occasion, it would seem, they had acquired an unenviable notoriety. But I can only speak of them as I found them; and if I experienced at last some difficulty in making my escape, it was from nothing more dangerous than hospitality.

Altogether, Mukhtara and its neighbourhood possessed so much fascination, that it was with regret I found myself unable to accept the invitation of my kind hosts, and prolong my stay over another day. I was obliged to leave the rest of the party here, and push on by myself to Damascus. The route I proposed to take was one very little traversed, and it was necessary to find a guide in the village who knew it. I can imagine no more delightful headquarters for excursions than Mukhtara. Not only does the scenery possess a special charm of its own, but ruins, all of more or less antiquarian interest, are scattered over the country; and the remains of ancient art lie buried among the beauties of nature.

Our last evening was spent in comparative calm.

The villagers, exhausted with their exertions, had gone home; the young mother and child were doing well, in spite of all they had gone through; and considering how little rest we had any of us enjoyed for the last thirty-six hours, there was a general disposition to retire early. As I intended to start before my hosts were up, I took a cordial leave of them, and not long after sunrise on the following morning found myself alone *en route*, with Mukhtara, now silent, behind me, and before me the towering peaks of the Lebanon, across which lay my day's journey.

CHAPTER XV.

ASCENT OF THE LEBANON RANGE—THE BUKA'A—AITHI—AN INHOSPITABLE RECEPTION—AN EDUCATED SYRIAN—ARRIVAL AT DAMASCUS—A GEOLOGICAL EXCURSION—THE BAGHDAD POSTMEN—DHUMAYR—WEDDING FESTIVITIES AT ADRA—DERVISH MIRACLES—SERPENT-EATING—KNIFE-STABBING AND IMPERVIOUSNESS TO FIRE—THE DERVISH SHEIKH'S EXPLANATION—A DAMASCUS THEATRE—THE ARAB OPERA OF "AÏDA."

THE first part of the road from Mukhtara to Damascus is little better than a staircase. The faculty of climbing, which is inherent in Lebanon ponies, enables them to overcome difficulties that would seem insurmountable in civilised countries; and although it was often necessary to dismount and drive my pony before me, he scrambled up the steep mountain-side like a goat, too well pleased to be rid of his burden to make any objections to the path he was called upon to travel. Even up here, amid overhanging rocks, and on the precipitous hillsides, every inch of available ground was cultivated, chiefly with vines. These are neither trellised nor dwarfed into standard bushes, but trailed over the rocks: the grapes are thus kept out of what little soil there is, and ripened by the heat of the stone.

This cultivation extended for about an hour, and ceased at the village of Khorabeh, the highest inhabited spot in the valley, and the limit of cultivation. Here I found some traces of ancient ruins, the remains of walls composed of huge blocks of stone, some arches still standing, and all the indications of what may have been, in the time of the Crusaders, or possibly before that time, a frontier fort. We still had some more climbing to do before making a sharp descent into a wild, desolate valley; and then we found ourselves at the foot of the highest range of the Lebanon.

It was a long, dreary pull up the steep mountain-side, with nothing to relieve the fatigue except the views back over the country I had left. All around was bleak and barren: the path was so little traversed that it was a mere track; and I did not meet a soul after leaving Khorabeh till I reached the first village, at the foot of the mountain on the other side. At the summit of the pass, which I estimated at about 6000 feet above the level of the sea, I crossed a patch of snow, and then, with a last look westwards, eagerly pressed on to the view which I knew was awaiting me in the opposite direction.

The last few minutes before reaching the crest of a high mountain-range—when one has no idea of what is to be seen beyond—is always a period of most agreeable suspense and anticipation; and when the glorious panorama unfolds, and the extensive

landscape bursts upon one in all its novelty and beauty, how amply does it compensate for the monotony and fatigue of the ascent! From the point where I was then standing, Cœlesyria lay mapped out at my feet. To the right, the snowy peaks of Mount Hermon closed the prospect; and from its shoulder, stretching away northward, was the range of the Anti-Lebanon. Immediately below, the plain of the Buka'a, dotted with villages, and watered by the Litany, gradually tapered to the gorge by which that river forces its way to the sea, through the Lebanon range, while it spread out, in all its rich luxuriance, in the opposite direction, as far as Baalbec, fifty miles distant. Map in hand, I could recognise every village, and stood no longer in need of a guide, although I kept him with me—for my night quarters, though still distant, were almost visible. Then we plunged down the precipitous descent, and once more found ourselves in the midst of an abundant vegetation and a busy population. Travellers by the main road to Damascus and Baalbec are so familiar with the Buka'a that I will spare them a description of it, though I descended upon it by a little-known route, and entered it to the south of the tourist's track.

After a delightful plunge in the turbid waters of the Litany—for the heat of the valley after the snow-tipped ridge struck so sharp a contrast that a bath was doubly grateful—I pushed on into the

spurs of the Anti-Lebanon, reaching, a little before dark, the Christian village of Aithi, where I had some difficulty in finding accommodation. It was an inhospitable, uninviting place; and in this respect contrasted most unfavourably with the Druse quarters I had just left. The people first stared at me, and then quarrelled over me, the dispute being, so far as I could gather, who should *not* have the honour of entertaining me as a guest. After one or two vain attempts had been made to induce me to accept accommodation which an Irish pig would have scorned, I finally found my way to the best-looking house in the village, which turned out to be the sheikh's. As that dignitary was absent, I was somewhat coldly regarded by the female part of his establishment, who, however, at last consented to put me up, on the distinct understanding that I was not to turn them out of the only decent room in the house, but share it with them. This prospect was by no means tempting, considering the operation which one fat woman was performing upon the head of another, the generally "insecty" look of the place, and the number of babies which were promiscuously lying about and squalling when they were not engaged in sustaining nature. So I wandered about helplessly, making vain attempts to force myself upon the hospitality—which was to be liberally paid for—of the owners of the best houses I could find; but I received nothing but grunts and scowls, until

a dirty Greek priest with an eye to the main chance, came to my rescue, and offered to turn all his women out of a relatively sweet apartment, have the mud floor watered, swept, and matted, and abandon it to me for my sole use and occupation for the night. I was thankful to close with the offer; and half-a-dozen women were soon busily engaged sweeping, cleaning, and cooking, while all the neighbours came in to stare at so unusual a visitor. As I had some difficulty, in the absence of any interpreter, in making myself understood, the priest, who was very voluble, and absorbed with a desire for imparting information, triumphantly announced that there was a Syrian schoolmaster in the village who could speak English, or, at all events, had been educated in a missionary school; and he shortly returned with a very ill-favoured and unhealthy youth, who, on the strength of his advanced state of civilisation, seized me by the hand, and loudly exclaimed, "Good morning!" though the sun was just then setting; then pulling out an English and Arabic pocket dictionary, and studying it for some time, he said, in a peremptory tone, "Can you eat a hen?" I had already, before his arrival, expressed my willingness to attempt this feat; but he was too proud of the tremendous effect his learning had produced on the bystanders to hide his talent under a bushel, and kept on repeating the question from time to time. It was his supreme effort. He

said a good deal more, it is true, apparently under the impression that it was English, as he repeatedly referred to the book; but the sounds which he produced were inarticulate and vague; and he afterwards became so troublesome by his insistance that I should communicate with him by means of his dictionary, which he had great difficulty in reading, that I requested him to return to his pupils, if he had any. So far from his taking the hint, he established himself in my room for the evening; and even after I had politely pointed out the word "kick," as a hint that there were several ways of leaving a room, he resolutely declined to move until I showed him the point of my boot, and indicated, as good-naturedly as I could, by signs, the method of its application, when he went out in high dudgeon, and I heard him abusing me all down the street. I have since learnt generally to detect at a glance Syrians who have received the advantages of a smattering of education, by the extraordinary insolence which distinguishes them, and a presumption and familiarity which are not at all justified by the very limited extent of their accomplishments. Other visitors I had who were by no means so offensive; and they sat and gossiped as I dined on "hen," and took me out and showed me the ruins of a Roman temple, in the centre of the village, manifesting a good deal of intelligent interest in their inquiries as to what its original use might have been. The chief industry of Aithi is pottery-

ware; and jars and pitchers, made of the excellent clay in the neighbourhood, find a ready market in Damascus.

As the village is more than 3000 feet above the level of the sea, and I had still a slight ascent to make, the keen north wind struck chill when I started at six o'clock the following morning, though April was already far advanced. Crossing smooth grassy hills, I came unexpectedly, in about an hour after leaving my quarters, upon remains, which I stopped a short time to examine. They are near a spring called Ain Kenia, and consist of ruined walls still standing to a height of three or four feet, composed of huge blocks of stone, and which apparently enclosed two temples, each 20 yards by 16. In one were two prostrate columns and a carved capital; in the other, two fragments of columns still standing. I have not been able to discover the Roman name of the town of which these ruins were the remains. Half an hour later, after traversing a pretty but poorly cultivated country, I reached the village of Jedeideh, on the Damascus road; and five hours afterwards, found myself amid the shady groves on the banks of the Barada, and surrounded by all the indications of proximity to that queen of oriental cities, Damascus.

I was most kindly received at Damascus by Midhat Pasha, then Governor-General of Syria, who entered warmly into the project for the colonisation of

Gilead, which I submitted for his approval. I was detained three weeks elaborating it under the supervision of his Highness; and I was encouraged, by the high appreciation which he seemed to entertain of the advantages of the scheme, to hope that I should find its merits as cordially recognised at Constantinople.

I was not sorry to avail myself of the opportunity which my stay at Damascus afforded, of making some excursions in the neighbourhood. With my friend Mr Austin, on a geological errand bent, I started one morning by the Aleppo gate, and following the broad road which leads to Homs and Hamath—and, if one follows it far enough, to Aleppo and Constantinople—reached in a couple of hours the large village of Duma. Here we met the *avant-garde* of a large caravan which was arriving from Baghdad; and I gazed with no little interest at the uncouth riders, who seemed as joyous as the crew of a ship just arriving in port after a long voyage. They had left the main body of the caravan behind them, while they went on to make preliminary preparations, and were, doubtless, eagerly anticipating the pleasure of plunging into the delights and dissipations of Damascus.

At an empty barrack a little beyond Duma the road to Aleppo and Palmyra turns to the north, while we continued on the Baghdad road, through richly cultivated country, though the gardens and fruit-orchards which embosom Damascus here ceased;

but the Merj or irrigated plain, thickly populated, extends away to the "Meadow Lakes," some ten or twelve miles distant to the south-east. We skirted its northern margin, our road leading us along the base of the sterile range of the Jebel Kalamûn.

We galloped over the short grass pasture-land where wild liquorice was growing in great abundance, to the village of Adra, where a large number of the Agidat Arabs were encamped and pasturing their flocks. They are a sedentary tribe of amiable herdsmen; and we sent over to the tents for a guide to lead us to the particular part of the Jebel Abu Ata which we wished to investigate. In an hour and a half after leaving Adra, under the guidance of the Arab, we crossed an ancient water-course leading to some extensive ruins which I had not time to visit, and reached a ruined *khan*. All cultivation had ceased, and we traversed a desert covered with flint, onyx, chalcedony, agate, and other pebbles which had been subjected to volcanic action. We scrambled over this difficult country till nightfall, along narrow wadies, up dry torrent-beds, and across serrated ridges. On one of these I perched myself while the sun was setting—my friend was otherwise engaged—and revelled in a bath of colour, as the slanting rays seemed literally to burnish the barren hillsides, and their shadows fell encroachingly on the richly tinted desert, which changed its hues as it receded, until its horizon was lost in the haze,

out of which the burning heats of the day were fading. Below me, a little to the east lay the village of Dhumayr, the last permanently inhabited spot on this side of the Euphrates; beyond it stretched the illimitable desert; barely visible in a southerly direction was the water-line of the marshy lakes called Bahret el' Atebeh, in which the ancient rivers of Damascus, the Abana and Pharpar, lose themselves. Beyond them, again, is the long volcanic range of Tulûl el Safa, a series of extinct craters, situated in a district, only portions of which have as yet been explored at different times by M. Waddington, Mr Wetzstein, and Captain Burton. They form the centre of a notoriously wild and lawless region, which the Government has vainly attempted to reduce to order by the establishment of a military post near a spot called the Derb el Ghazawât, or Road of the Robberies, on account of its insecurity; but it is a road nobody travels, as it leads nowhere: there is nothing beyond but unexplored desert, excepting the three interesting ruins of El Diyura, which are situated on its nearest margin. Looking in a south-westerly direction, the eye wandered over the broad green Merj. An expanse of corn-field and pasture, and dotted with numerous villages and encampments, it is bounded by the low barren range of the Jebel-el-Aswad or Black Mountain, far behind which again, and a little more to the east, the lofty summits of the Jebel Druse, the home of nearly three-fourths of

the Druse nation, bounded the prospect. To the far west, the gardens of Damascus concealed all view of the glittering city which nestles in their shade, but contrasted wondrously in their soft colouring with the brilliant copper tints of the desert ranges by which they are surrounded. Behind all, majestic Hermon reared its snow-clad crests, glowing with crimson light, and so completing a panorama unrivalled in the richness of its hues, and the striking contrasts which its principal features presented.

The village of Dhumayr, which lay on the plain below, two or three miles distant to the eastward, is the point at which the Arab express courier, after a nine days' and nights' journey across the desert, delivers up his mail. The wild Bedouin who performs this dangerous, solitary, and fatiguing journey, rarely enters the two centres of Eastern civilisation, between which he furnishes a means of communication. For him the fragrant gardens and well-stocked bazaars of Damascus have no attraction; or perhaps he fears that he might be seduced by them, and avoids the temptation. Be that as it may, he stops on the verge of the desert, at either end of his route, and swings on his lithe dromedary to and fro over its arid wastes, catching such snatches of rest as he may at the scattered oases and widely separated wells where he stops to refresh his camel. With the coppery sky scorching him by day, and the changeless blue above him at night; rarely

knowing the shelter even of an Arab tent; carrying with him the dates and rice sufficient to last him for his journey; exposed to perils from thirst and sand-storms and predatory Arabs, to whom the fleet animal he rides is a sore temptation,—he is, without doubt, the most *bizarre* and exceptional postman in existence. One wonders whether he has really ever fathomed the mystery of his occupation, or found out why he should thus be kept constantly oscillating between the opposite margins of the desert with a bag; whether he knows what is in the bag, or, if he does, can form any conception why people in Damascus should care to know what people are doing in Baghdad, for he can never have experienced the sensation of wanting either to receive or to send a letter. It is probably with a considerable feeling of scorn and contempt that he ministers to this morbid craving for imparting and receiving useless information. Then, again, what opportunities for profound reflection he enjoys! Rarely exchanging a word with his fellow-man, yet constantly battling with hidden dangers—always on the alert, and yet never varying the eternal monotony of sky and desert—the mystery of existence must present the problems which civilisation has failed to fathom, in an entirely new light to him for ever perched on the back of a dromedary. For all we know, he may have framed a theory of evolution depending on "environment," by which, when the fittest is called upon to survive,

he may remain the sole representative of the human race. Meanwhile the types of the highest state of civilisation, *blasés* with its discoveries, are driven to suicide, and find life monotonous because it is made up of "buttoning and unbuttoning;" but he who is never called upon to do either the one or the other, serenely leads the most monotonous existence of all. Yet no thought of self-destruction from *ennui* ever enters his mind as he jogs backwards and forwards over the dreary waste with the bag which he despises. Except, possibly, the gentlemen who prefer being stage-coachmen to any other existence, and daily leave the White Horse Cellar in all weathers throughout the London season, who is there who is likely to have attained to the calm elevation of his philosophy? And even these do not carry a post-bag.

It is sad to think that the day may not be far distant when the occupation of this interesting specimen of humanity will be gone; when the shrill scream of the locomotive, piercing the still air of night, will scare the jackals who now make it resound with their plaintive cries, and introduce the Baghdad postman to "the blessings of civilisation," of which he has till now been deprived. Flying across the desert by the Euphrates Valley Railway, tightly wedged between a set of cardsharpers in a third-class carriage, he may possibly look back with a smile of pity to his dromedary days; but it is a

question whether he will be a better or a wiser man, especially if, to relieve the monotony of the journey, his companions initiate him into the mysteries of their vocation, or make him its victim. Let us hope that his instinct may teach him, if he would "evolve" into higher conditions, to telegraph for his dromedary to meet him at the next station, and to fly upon it to the uttermost recesses of his beloved desert, where, once more encompassed by the serene atmosphere of philosophical contemplation, he may reflect that, though he heard much among his fellow-passengers of the "blessings" and the "vices" of civilisation, there is still enough honesty left in Christendom to have refrained from the mockery of such a phrase as the "virtues of civilisation." What relation may exist between its "vices" and its "blessings" is a subject which may be recommended to the earnest and thoughtful consideration of the Baghdad postman.

I regretted very much that we had made arrangements with the sheikh at Adra for spending the night there, for I should have much preferred sleeping at Dhumayr, where I could distinguish the outline of a building rising high above the flat tops of the houses of the village. This was probably the Corinthian temple described by Dr Porter as being in a very complete state of preservation, the roof alone having fallen, and perhaps unique in its design. It bears an inscription showing it to have

been built in the reign of the two Philips, A.D. 246. About two miles farther east are the prostrate ruins of a small town and strong fortress. Indeed there can be little doubt that the whole of this region is only waiting a thorough exploration to reveal many still unknown relics of its former civilisation. Unfortunately, our researches had for their object discoveries more in accordance with the practical and utilitarian age in which we live, and we had not time to spare to trouble ourselves about the past; so we reluctantly decided to return to Adra, and ultimately reached the house of the sheikh, tolerably tired after fourteen hours in the saddle, on very limited sustenance, and quite ready, therefore, for dinner. What was our dismay to find, as we rode into the courtyard of his comfortable dwelling—for he was a well-to-do sheikh—that he was giving an entertainment in celebration of his daughter's wedding! The yard was full of a dancing, yelling crowd of *invités;* the roofs were thronged with female spectators, who also squatted on their heels round the court, and applauded the dances in which they were not allowed to take part. These consisted in the men forming a circle, or sometimes a half-circle, and pressing against each other as closely as possible, so that the movement of the ring should be absolutely simultaneous, and then dancing round in measured and somewhat monotonous step. The music was composed of drums and pipes, and made

a deafening and most discordant clamour. As the musicians changed the time, new steps were introduced, but none of them were graceful; and considering that it was ten o'clock at night, and we were famishing for want of food, we did not regard the performance with the interest and admiration that we should have shown under the pleasing influences of digestion.

At last the inevitable *pillaff* and *leben*, or sour milk, made their appearance, and we formed a rival attraction to the dancers, as we proceeded to dispose of our meal in the presence of the company. It was no use attempting to go to sleep until the entertainment was at an end; and it was past midnight before we were enabled to stretch our weary limbs on the coverlets that had been spread on the floor, and seek repose in peace and quiet, except from fleas.

In the morning there arrived a fantastic dervish armed with a whip, and a boy dressed as a girl with castanets, and two musicians with a drum and a sort of banjo, and their performances soon attracted a crowd, though they were neither refined nor edifying. The boy was dressed and danced very much after the manner of a nautch-girl in India, only rather "more so," while the dervish cracked his whip and acted the part of a somewhat immoral buffoon—so we were not tempted to linger longer than was absolutely necessary to swallow our morning coffee; and bidding adieu to the happy father of

the bride, who had treated us with the greatest hospitality, we turned our faces homewards, and the same afternoon reached Damascus.

Mrs Burton, in her charming work, 'Inner Life in Syria,' has described so fully the fascination which clings to this patriarch among the cities of the earth, that she has left little to the traveller whose experiences have been limited to weeks instead of years. But even in that short time he becomes conscious of an aroma, if one may so express it, peculiar to itself,—a halo of mysticism, as well as of antiquity, which seems to pervade its fountained courts, its mazy bazaars, its fragrant groves, its rushing waters, and surrounding ruins. It is a concentration of what Kinglake calls "the splendour and the havoc of the East;" and if its fading splendour and present havoc fail to furnish the key to the mystery of its long existence, they at least invest it with an unrivalled charm of association, carrying us back to the days when the traditions of religion are lost in obscurity, and arts were professed, and mysteries practised, which in these days would be deemed superstitious, but which in olden time formed the foundations upon which men's theological belief was built. As it has been at all times a centre of occult knowledge, I was anxious to learn its existing phase; and though my opportunities were too limited to enable me to make inquiries in the particular direction in which I had reason to believe facts of interest were to be dis-

covered, I succeeded by means of the police in making the acquaintance of a personage of some celebrity in his way. This was a certain Sheikh Ruslan Aboutou, who lived in a quarter of Damascus known as the Meidan. It is a curious projection from the city, extending for a mile and a half in a southerly direction in a long narrow line like the handle of a frying-pan—supposing the pan to represent the city itself—and owes its shape and existence, doubtless, to the fact that by this road the Hadj or pilgrimage leaves Damascus for Mecca, and so shops, and dwellings, and storehouses have sprung up on each side of it, until they terminate at the Bawwabet Allah or God's gates. Here dwell a most strange assortment of characters. There are dervishes and the hangers-on of the Hadj, Arabs from the desert, Druses from the Hauran, Mollahs, and corn merchants—for it is a great grain depot—tumble-down dwellings of vast dimensions and ghostly in their dilapidation, mosques, and low-class *hammams* and cheap *khans*; while strings of camels arriving from distant oases, accompanied by wild-looking Bedouins, mingle with flocks of sheep driven by Kurd shepherds. On the right-hand side of the street, which is unusually broad, and about half-way down it, was situated the house of the sheikh—an unpretentious building with a small courtyard, in which were two or three orange-trees, and overlooked by the flat roofs of the neighbouring houses.

We arrived here one afternoon, a somewhat larger party than was wise, perhaps, considering the nature of the spectacle that was reserved for us; but the attraction proved too tempting for some ladies who were visiting Damascus to withstand, though it is not likely they will ever repeat the experiment. The sheikh received us at the door of his courtyard, which was already tolerably full of native spectators, and of persons who were to take part in the performances; while many veiled women, who had apparently got notice that the sheikh was going to exhibit his powers, crowded the surrounding roofs. We took our seats on a divan in an apartment, one side of which was open to the court, while from the others doors led into the house; from their slightly open chinks and crannies issued the murmur of women's voices. The sheikh himself was a tall handsome man of about fifty, with a short, well-trimmed, iron-grey beard, a bright intelligent eye, a somewhat hooked nose, and a mouth which, when he smiled, lighted up his face with a decidedly pleasing expression.

After the usual preliminary politeness of pipes, sherbet, and coffee, he went into an inner room, and reappeared with a bundle of iron skewers, very much resembling those used by cooks for trussing meat. Beckoning to a wild-looking dervish stripped to the waist, whose wandering eye had an evil look in it which the rest of his countenance did not belie—in

fact it was only redeemed from being villanous by a sort of glare of insanity—he made him open his mouth, and proceeded with the utmost coolness to pass a skewer from the inside through each cheek, so that the points could be seen plainly protruding. He then performed a like operation on a remarkably handsome youth of about sixteen, whom I afterwards found was his son, and whose large, clear, hazel eye was calmly fixed on mine while his cheeks were being pierced, nor did a line of his countenance indicate that he was conscious of the slightest pain. Not a drop of blood flowed in either case. The two victims stood before us with their mouths pressed back, and the projecting skewers showing the points through their cheeks, with as much apparent comfort as if it was the normal condition of their being. Leaving them in this attitude, the sheikh again disappeared into his room. This time he returned with a small square box, drawing back the sliding lid of which he extracted a scorpion of unusual size, its vicious tail curling and striking its own back as it writhed between his fingers. This he handed to another dervish, clothed and looking more in his right mind than his skewered comrade, who instantly dropped the lively reptile into his mouth, and crunched it with great apparent gusto. As he was as large as an ordinary land-crab, it was a big mouthful, and seemed to whip up into a sort of lather as he chewed it. His countenance as he went on munching was

so impassive that I could not judge whether live scorpion is nice or not: probably it is an acquired taste. Another dervish joined in the repast, and disposed of a smaller one with equal equanimity.

I now suggested that we were satisfied in regard to the skewers, and that the company generally would feel more comfortable if they were extracted. It is decidedly unpleasant to have two men with their cheeks trussed staring at you while others are eating live scorpions. Their mouths were so pressed back that they seemed to be grinning inanely; but I should think the effect of a real joke would have been disagreeable. I longed to try and make them laugh, to see whether it would not hurt them; but there is probably no such thing as a dervish with a sense of humour, and an Arabic joke was beyond me. The sheikh, too, would probably have been offended, for he went through the whole performance with the greatest solemnity, taking long, deep inspirations as he muttered incantations in which the name of Allah occurred frequently, before he touched the skewers; then with a dentist-like twitch he jerked them out. The points were bloodless, and the outside of the cheek showed only a slight induration, like that of a cicatrised wound; there was no redness or inflammation.

The sheikh now once more returned to his room and brought out a larger box, which he opened, and drew forth from it several snakes of all sizes. These

began to wriggle about the floor in a disagreeable manner, with an overpowering attraction apparently for the legs of foreigners. However, the sheikh charmed them in the usual manner, and they soon all curled up submissively; then taking one about two feet long by the tail, he held it up in a manner so tempting that it proved irresistible to a tall, perfectly insane-looking dervish, who was afflicted with a sort of St Vitus's dance, and who, rushing forward out of the crowd, gave a loud yell, snatched the twisting snake out of the sheikh's hands with both of his, gave it a sudden violent jerk which snapped it in two, and plunged the bleeding and palpitating end into his mouth. This was a signal for a general scramble; the half-naked dervish who had been skewered seized hold of the other end, and secured at least six inches all to himself. The men who had eaten the scorpions joined in voraciously, and in two minutes the entire animal had disappeared, and the human beings who had eaten it were wiping their bloody chops with much apparent relish. The tall St Vitus's dance man, indeed, seemed to become intoxicated with delight or some other emotion, and went into a sort of convulsion, from which he was only restored by the most intense effort on the part of the sheikh, who seized his head between his hands, pressing it violently as he took long breaths, and the veins swelled in his forehead with the concentration of his magnetic or other forces, as he re-

peated the formula of incantation, and finally restored his disciple, of whom he was evidently proud, to comparative calm. With the exception of the skewer affair, there was nothing very wonderful in all this; for, after all, the power of a man to make a beast of himself may be pushed to a very considerable length before it becomes inexplicable, so I was relieved to see preparations for experiments of a different nature.

A brazier of burning charcoal was brought in, and the charcoal fanned into a blaze. The sheikh then went through an invocation, and suddenly with his bare feet jumped upon it and stood there for nearly a minute, the lurid flame curling round them. The moment he got off, the serpent-eaters rushed forward and filled their mouths with the red-hot charcoal, which was again fanned, the smell of burning flesh becoming powerful and sickening as they crunched the glowing morsels. Live coals are possibly the antidote to snakes after you have eaten them; but the general effect of all this strange diet was beginning to have a powerful influence upon the nerves of some of the lady spectators, who protested that they were unable to witness further horrors. A man now stepped forward, stripped to the waist, with a skin almost as fair as a European's. His face had none of that expression of fanatical insanity which characterised some of his fraternity, but was calm and somewhat commonplace. The sheikh reappeared armed

with a skewer of larger dimensions than he had thrust through the cheeks of the first victims, to the end of which was attached a heavy iron ball, and proposed to run it through the man's throat from the front, bringing it out at the nape of his neck. At this there was a general scream of horror and dismay. In vain did the sheikh protest that the operation would be absolutely painless, and show us the indurated spots on the opposite sides of the man's neck through which the instrument was in the habit of passing, while the man himself smiled with a bland expression of disappointment at being deprived of a pleasure to which he was apparently looking forward. The repugnance of some of our party was not to be overcome, and the sheikh turned with an expression of contempt to make preparations for what was to follow. Pushing the same dervish's waistcloth down an inch or two he revealed a row of cicatrices which made a semicircle extending round his body. He then drew a curved knife about eight inches long and nearly two broad from a sheath, and proposed to plunge it to the hilt in his stomach. It had a short wooden handle about four inches in length, and there was no possibility of the blade slipping back into the handle. But here again he was stopped by a cry of horror from the ladies. This time the man himself earnestly joined his protestations to those of the sheikh; his credit seemed at stake, as the women on the house-tops began to

chatter, and there was a general look of dissatisfaction on the part of the spectators in the courtyard. I examined both the scars and the knife. The former were thin beautifully healed incisions; the latter as sharp as a razor and of the finest steel. I am very sorry that veracity compels me to leave this most interesting experiment to the reader's imagination. The party had now made up their minds to leave the place, and seemed to have no other idea than a hurried escape from its precincts; so we made rather an ignominious exit, leaving the sheikh bewildered and somewhat indignant at our pusillanimous conduct.

I asked him, however, to pay me a visit on the following day, which he did, and I had a long interesting conversation with him. He said he was the hereditary descendant of the founder of the Order of Bedawi, of which he was now the spiritual chief, and which numbered about 10,000 dervishes. These were scattered throughout Islam, and claimed adherents in all classes of society. He named one of high rank. The order was secret to a great extent, and there were those who openly professed to belong to it, as well as those who could exercise the special powers which attach to it without its being generally known. The founder of the order was a certain Sheikh Said Ahmed el Bedawi, who lived about two hundred years ago, was a Moslem of great reputation for sanctity, and is

buried in the Church of the Crusaders at Tantah in Egypt. The Sheikh el Bedawi had been initiated into these mysteries, having naturally a wonderful faculty for acquiring them; but the present sheikh did not profess that they had originated with him. He said that the power to perform these wonders dated back to an unknown period, and came from still further east; and that it was the same power which had been exercised by the sages, seers, and magicians of the Bible and other sacred books: that such powers were not confined to his order, though they exercised them in a more wonderful manner than the other miracle-working sects. These consisted of the Sukki, founded by the Sheikh Said Ibrahim; the Kilani, founded by the Sheikh Awal-abd-el-Kader; and the Rifai, founded by the Sheikh Ahmed el Rifai. He said that these were good men and devout Moslems, and that the faculty which their disciples possessed, depended on the purity and morality of the lives which they led. It was not, however, necessary to be a Moslem in order to be a member of the order, though practically none but Moslems were members of it; but a belief in the Sheikh Bedawi as the source of such power was absolutely necessary so far as his sect was concerned. I then asked him in regard to the rites of initiation, and his own experience and training. He said that from his earliest infancy he had been educated by his father, as he was then educating

his son, to exercise the powers which were hereditary in the family; that they were to be cultivated by much intense prayer and concentration of will. He then repeated the prayers and modes of invocation. I think he had some suspicion that I might become a neophyte, so earnest was he in his definition of the necessary process. Drawing long and deep breaths, he muttered, or rather whispered, in an attitude of the most intense internal concentration, the formulæ. Becoming more and more abstracted as he did so, he said, as he stopped suddenly, that were he to go on a little longer he should fall into a trance; that when he was in a trance state he saw and conversed with the Sheikh el Bedawi, but it was never permitted to him to reveal what passed at these spiritual interviews; that those who wished to become disciples must learn this method of prayer and concentration; that they must also swear to the seven nomothetical precepts of Mohammedanism, which are indeed purely ethical, and apply to all religions—and that they must rigidly practise these virtues; that they must finally take the initiatory draught which imparted the healing power to the saliva, whereby incisions could be made, and the flow of blood prevented, by wetting the finger with the tongue and instantly pressing it on the wound. The draught was prepared by a cabalistic formula, which he wrote for me in my pocket-book, being inscribed on a piece of sugar, which

was then melted in water, with the proper form of invocation. He declared that the water became thus charged with a special virtue, and imparted to the drinker healing powers, which he retained so long as he remained faithful to his vows. He admitted that these practices were not recognised by the Koran, and were even opposed in theory to the general teaching of Mohammedanism; but he said they were permitted for a special purpose, and this was to convince unbelievers that the powers claimed by seers and holy men of old were not mere fables, but were actual facts and the basis of the religious belief; that he was specially instructed never to exhibit his powers for the gratification of mere idle curiosity; and that if he attempted these manifestations from any but the highest motives, and in obedience to internal directions received from the Sheikh Bedawi, they would prove fatal; but that when done in an orderly manner, and from a religious motive, they caused no pain and were attended with no danger. He further said that the peculiar strength of the Bedawi lay in their power of dealing with fire; and that if I would stay in Damascus long enough, he would show me men go into a fiery furnace, which he had in his house for the purpose, and come out as unscathed as Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego after a similar experience.

I afterwards conversed with a very learned Mos-

lem on the subject, who confirmed what the sheikh had said in regard to the innovation upon the pure precepts of his religion which such practices involved; but he remarked, somewhat slyly, "Where would Christianity be without the belief in the possibility of such powers? These men do not claim more than has been claimed at all times and in all religions, and they are necessary to prove to unbelievers that their creeds are not built upon fables; it is only natural that the Power which established them upon these supernatural foundations should keep them alive by manifestations of the same character. Why should such exhibitions be permitted to start a religion and not be continued to maintain its existence? The only reason why such powers die out of a religion which once possessed them is because the faith of its adherents has dwindled away. Hence Christianity can no longer exercise them, even though in your Bible it is said they should be retained; but Moslems, though no such promise is made to them, are able to prove to believers in the Koran that in the degree in which they practise its virtues can they manifest divine powers. Hence it is, that though I have nothing to do with such sects myself, I feel that they have their use, and I believe in the truth of their miracles."

Mr Chirol, who was with me upon this occasion, afterwards witnessed a similar performance at Aleppo, when he saw the knives plunged into the bodies

of dervishes, leaving only a cicatrice without any effusion of blood, and was unable to discover any deception in the matter.

I also met an English medical man afterwards who had lived all his life in the East, and who told me he had repeatedly seen both the operations which I had missed, and had had abundant opportunities of examining the piercing the throat with the skewer, and the plunging the knife into the stomach; and he was utterly unable to explain how it was done without causing death, much less the effusion of blood, or to account for it by any trick or sleight-of-hand operation. In fact the danger, as my Moslem friend observed, of refusing beyond a certain point to trust the evidence of one's own senses, is that we believe in what are termed miracles, and occurrences far more wonderful, upon the evidence of the senses of persons probably more easily deceived than ourselves, who lived ages ago. Thus, if in these days the curative power of saliva, the subduing of serpents, scorpions, and other "deadly things," the imperviousness to fire, and the healing of a sword-cut by a touch, are nothing more than a trick by which the most acute and intelligent observer may be deceived, the modern religious sceptic is fairly entitled to maintain that the same trick was known to fanatical religious impostors for the last two thousand years or more. It is evident, therefore, that there must be a limit to the scepticism of one's own senses

and those of others, or one would be left without any ground for believing in anything.

Among other novelties which have been introduced into Damascus since the arrival there of Midhat Pasha as Governor-General of Syria, is an Arab theatre upon semi-civilised principles. I went there one night with his Highness, and was surprised at the modern aspect of the house. There was a ticket-seller at a *guichet*, and a house neatly arranged with seats, which were well occupied by an exclusively male audience. In the front row were the seats reserved for the Governor-General's party; while the orchestra—consisting of a man who played an instrument like a guitar, another who played one like a zittern, another who played a native clarionet, another who sang, and another who drummed—were placed in a recess to the right of the stage. The curtain was inscribed with an Arabic motto, and rose and fell with irregular jerks; the scenes did not change; and the actors sang, or rather chanted, their parts. The play was the original story, which Verdi has adapted, and the plot of which he has considerably altered, of "Aïda." The leading actor, who performed the part of the general, was a man of considerable dramatic power, clad in a coat of mail with a most fantastic helmet, which at the opening scene partly concealed his face, and whose lower extremities were clothed in thick white hose. He stalked about the stage unceasingly in his stocking-soles,

swaying his body in a measured and not ungraceful manner, so as to keep time with the cadence of his voice, which was expressive of his varied emotions and by no means unmusical. The Egyptian king's daughter, who was in love with him, and the Abyssinian king's daughter, whom he makes a prisoner in war, and with whom he falls in love, thus nearly breaking the other one's heart, were both boys dressed as girls, who acted their parts with great feeling and cleverness, considering their youth. Indeed it was difficult to tell that they were not girls. They were picturesquely attired in oriental costumes, the one as a slave, the other as a king's daughter; but the other female attendants wore semi-Europeanised dresses which were by no means becoming. The king of Egypt was a splendidly arrayed monarch, after the style of the conventional Sardanapalus; and he did the Eastern potentate to perfection. Indeed the whole performance was far more skilfully executed than might have been expected, though of acting, in the strict sense of the word, there was none: it was recitation, now plaintive, now impassioned, and, in the case of one character, jocose; but the perpetual motion of the players, who move rhythmically about the stage all the time, grows somewhat monotonous to the foreigner accustomed to more lively action. The audience, however, seemed thoroughly to enter into the spirit of the piece, and appreciated the jokes keenly. During the *entr'actes* the Arab

band played the wild discordant music with which all Eastern travellers are familiar, and which is to be heard any day in the *cafés* and gardens of the city. The ballet was of the tamest description, and consisted of the most wearisome repetition of little steps. It was in every respect strictly proper, and was danced by the youths who represented the princess's ladies. The whole affair was an experiment which seems likely to succeed, and on the whole, was a pleasing if slightly dull performance.

CHAPTER XVI.

START FOR BAALBEC AND MALULA—WADIES AND SAHARAS—TOURIST VANDALISM AT BAALBEC—CROSS THE ANTI-LEBANON—TUNNEL ENTRANCE TO MALULA—ITS ROMANTIC POSITION—THE SYRIAC LANGUAGE—GREEK MONASTERIES—THE CONVENT OF SEDNAYA—THE MIRACLE-WORKING MADONNA—MENIN—RETURN TO DAMASCUS—START FOR ZAHLEH—ITS PICTURESQUE SITUATION—CROSS THE LEBANON—MEZRA'A—ABDULLA, THE SON OF JIRIUS THE PRIEST.

THERE lies to the north-east of Damascus, and a little to the right of the road which leads from that city to Aleppo, a town rarely visited by the foreigner, and which possesses a special interest as being the only place left in the country where the old Syriac or Aramaic language is still spoken. It was known to the ancients as Magluda, and is called in these days Malula. Finding it could be reached in one day from Baalbec, by a road which was not generally known, I was glad to accept the invitation of our Vice-consul, Mr Jago, to make the trip with him. We took the usual route to Baalbec, by way of the picturesque spring of Ain Fijeh, sleeping the first night at the lofty village of Bludan, which has been used by Damascus consuls as a retreat from the heat

of the city, ever since Sir Richard Wood first made it a sanitarium.

The peculiar characteristic and principal charm of the scenery which immediately surrounds Damascus, consists in the vivid contrasts which it presents. At one moment one is riding over an arid desert, where the eye is wearied with the monotony of desolation, where the rocks scorch and sand blinds, and the sun glares fiercely down upon the panting wayfarer; and just when it has grown almost intolerable you reach the precipitous edge of the Sahara, and plunge in a few moments into a perfect bath of the brightest green, where clear waters are plashing, birds are singing, leaves are rustling, and the most delightful shade woos you to its cool recesses. The trees are brilliant with fruit-blossoms, and the whole atmosphere is fragrant with their delicious perfume. What wonder if you linger amid these tempting groves of apricots, peaches, figs, almonds, pomegranates, mulberries, walnuts, and tall poplars? The ground is too valuable to be allowed to produce a useless tree; those which are not fruit-bearing are almost exclusively poplars, used for building purposes. Even the villages are placed on the edge of the desert, so that people may not waste the ground which it is possible to irrigate by living on it. Little runnels of water trickle in every direction in these cool seductive shades, which, however, like other attractions to the

senses, are not altogether without their danger, for the sudden change from the heats of the desert to such enchanting but damp spots, is likely to produce a chill and its attendant fever,—a fact which it is difficult to realise as one plunges into the crystal fountain where it wells in a full torrent from its source—as at Ain Fijeh—as cold as ice, and foams away to give life and sustenance to the thousands who live upon the abundance produced by the lands which it waters. For the time, at all events, invigorated and refreshed, we scorn all sanitary considerations, and brace ourselves once more to meet the fatigue and the drowsiness which the desert sun produces after our relaxation. And so we jog wearily on to our night quarters, which invite us to a repose more grateful, if possible, than the last. Bludan is situated at an elevation of 5000 feet above the sea, so our night was most refreshingly cool.

On the following day we descended into the burning plain of the Buka'a, and were not sorry to see at last the tall trees and abundant vegetation which surrounds the grandest monument existing of a departed civilisation. The modern tourist, probably animated by a sentiment of spite at the consciousness of being such a pigmy as compared with the giants of art in those days, has taken to practising with a revolver at that more delicate tracery which is so far above his reach that he cannot destroy it with a hammer. Why he should of late have be-

come consumed with a passion for putting fragments of Baalbec upon his mantelpiece when he gets home, it is difficult to conceive, for the mind of the Cook's tourist in these matters is unfathomable; but certain it is, that within the last three years there has been such wholesale destruction with pistols going on, that most of those exquisite medallions, which a few years ago formed the chief glory of Baalbec, are completely effaced. The capitals of the Corinthian columns seem to make good targets for practice of this sort. You can aim at a particular fluted leaf, and have the pleasure of chipping the others all round until you bring down with a crash the particular piece of moulding you want. Then carved architraves are nice things to blaze away at, and the nose of an empress on a medallion forty feet above your head requires good shooting. I made inquiries on the spot as to the kind of people who were the best shots, and was informed that the American tourist carried all before him. This, however, I cannot speak of from personal knowledge; but I think the old practice of decorating the magnificent remains of a civilisation so superior to ours with one's name, was a more touching way of paying homage to them, than battering them to pieces with firearms and carrying off fragments as the evidence of one's æsthetic tastes. It is needless to suggest that it would be very easy to get a piece of stone anywhere and label it "Baalbec;" and I venture

to recommend that fragments from a neighbouring quarry should be carved and kept for this purpose, and sold to the tourist. It would be an additional source of revenue to the Turkish Government at a moment when its finances are sorely in need of assistance. On my return to Damascus I called the attention of the Vali to the destruction of Baalbec by the appliances of modern civilisation, at the hands of the race which has taken the reform of the Turkish empire so much to heart, and suggested that these "Baalbec atrocities" might be put an end to if a fee was charged, and a guard put over the ruins. If the Christian tourist was first made to pay, and then watched, the "unspeakable Turk" might possibly keep him in some sort of order.

The modern town of Baalbec is a more than usually flourishing place. The Christians are getting all the land into their hands, and are gradually ousting the Moslems, who, having no European Powers to protect them, are generally throughout Turkey the most hardly used class of the population. In the immediate neighbourhood of Damascus, it is true, the case is reversed; but away from the seat of government the Mohammedan peasantry are decidedly, as a rule, less well off, and have more burdens to bear and oppression to endure than their Christian neighbours, in whose favour humanitarian sympathy has been so largely and exclusively enlisted. As, however, the popular candidate, who expounds

on this subject to the ordinary British voter from a platform, seems to understand it so much better than people who have lived and travelled in the country, it would be presumptuous in me to allude to it at any greater length.

At Baalbec we met Mr Chirol, who arranged to accompany us on the following day on our ride to Malula.

About a mile and a half from Baalbec there is a beautiful and abundant spring, which is enclosed in a large basin, and is called Ras el Ain. It was the last inhabited spot we were to see for some hours, and with a heavy heart I turned my back upon the majestic ruin, whose most attractive features cannot long survive the attacks that are being made upon them. Our way led up a wild desolate wady, which reminded me of the Pass of Glencoe. We were travelling almost due east, and were breasting the western slopes of the Anti-Lebanon, which we were to cross by a pass at an elevation of about 7000 feet above the level of the sea. Our day's march promised to be a long and fatiguing one, so we had started early, and pushed forward after our nimble guide with as much expedition as the stony track which did duty for a road would allow. After a scramble of an hour and a half we reached the Neby Kokab, where there was a stream which repeatedly lost itself and reappeared as it dashed down a gully, colouring the stones with its strong mineral properties, and where, in a wild spot, there was the

tomb of a departed saint covered with relics. The steep hillsides here were not altogether barren, and in places the scenery was picturesque and even grand. Arbor-vitæ grew abundantly, intermingled with a few oaks; while in the crevices of the rocks grew small, flowering, thorny shrubs and forget-me-nots, and the Syrian speedwell blended its blue tints with bright pink and purple flowers, whose name was unknown to me.

When at last we reached the summit, it was not to find ourselves on the crest of the ridge with a panoramic view beyond, as we expected, but on the edge of a rocky plateau, covered with broad patches of snow. We had frequently to dismount in order to cross these, as the crust was scarcely strong enough to bear our horses without the riders, and in places the drifts were deep. The path was merely nominal, and practically we found our own way between or across them, coming occasionally upon patches of green, the result of temporary pools and streams formed by the melting snow, and furnishing pasture to occasional flocks of sheep, tended by wild-looking shepherds, who bivouacked in these cold regions in the summer, and who stared at us in amazement, as specimens of an unknown race. We only came across two or three of these herdsmen, and, with that exception, there were no signs of human life. The country was wild, craggy, and desolate in the extreme, but it had the immense

merit of being cool; and we quite regretted finding ourselves, after an hour and a half of this description of travel, gradually descending on the other side over arid wastes, till we reached, in six hours from Baalbec, the squalid Metawaly village of Zibdy, perched in a barren amphitheatre of rocks, perforated with caves, and of most uninviting appearance. The peculiar Mohammedan sect which inhabit it were notorious for their lawless character and thieving propensities, and we were not tempted to investigate it closely, as they looked ragged and scowling, but pushed on over the parched table-land beyond, under a blazing sun. There seemed no limit to the waste of desert upon which we had now entered, till suddenly, by one of those freaks of natural conformation which characterise the country, we came unexpectedly upon a ravine through which flowed a small stream, fringed by a margin of green corn-fields. It was the Wady Zaarur—a cleft in the Sahara; and when we had dived down into it, watered our thirsty steeds, and scrambled up on the other side, we could look back to the mountain-range beyond and see no sign of verdure or cultivation. Towering behind us, and a little to the right of the pass by which we had traversed the Anti-Lebanon, were the peaks of Nabi Baruch and Tala-al-Musa, rising to a height of 7900 and 8700 feet respectively; while away to the north, and just peeping from behind the shoulder of the low sand-range upon which we stood, we could

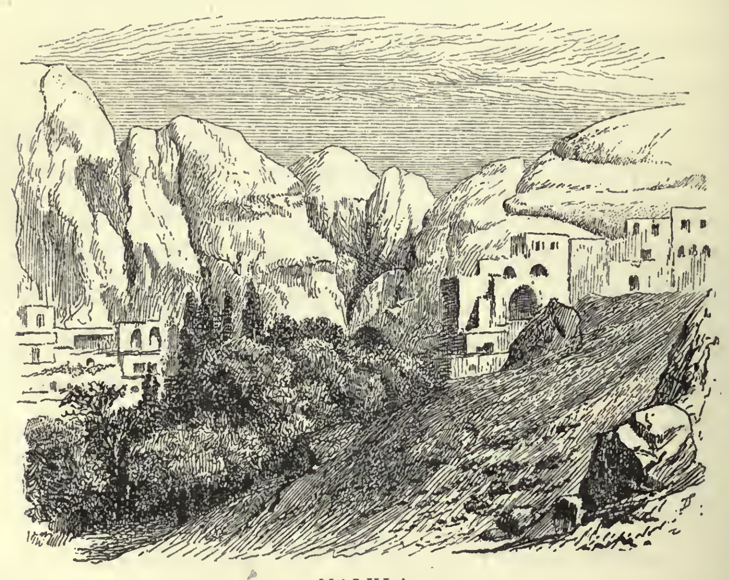
see the trees and orchards of the village of Yabrud faintly visible in the afternoon haze.

Yabrud is the Jabruda of Ptolemy, and a bishop of Yabrud is mentioned as having been present at the Council of Nicæa. There is a Greek church here of great antiquity, which is said to have been built by the Empress Helena; and near the town is the ruined castle of Kasr Berdawil, a colonnade of which is half preserved. I was sorry to be unable to visit these interesting and little-known remains, but they do not lie far off one of the roads leading from Damascus to Aleppo, by which they are the most accessible. We crossed this road before reaching Malula, and from it looked down upon a rocky sandstone ridge, which had been cleft as if by a knife. Our guide pointed to it and said "Malula;" but beyond the walls of a monastery at the entrance to the gorge, we could see no sign of human habitation. The rugged conformation of the sides of the ruptured rock as seen from this point was strikingly picturesque. We descended towards the monastery, but turned sharply to the right just before reaching it, and found ourselves on the brink of a yawning gulf which opened at the base of the cliff. It seemed impossible to plunge into the chasm on horseback, so we dismounted and let our beasts find their own way. The well-worn steps in the rock proved that it had been a sort of staircase used by animals from time immemorial, and our sure-

footed ponies did not hesitate to make the descent, while we scrambled down after them. We soon found ourselves in a sort of tunnel, the smooth rock rising to a height of 150 or 200 feet on each side, and closing in upon us to such an extent that we could only here and there see a strip of sky. The passage in places was not more than three feet wide, so that two animals could not have passed; and side chasms and crevices opened up into the rock, which was full of caves, while gigantic masses had fallen and got jammed in the huge cracks. Altogether it was the strangest and most weird entrance to the abode of man that I had ever seen; and my curiosity was excited to the highest pitch as we followed it for about a hundred yards, when we came to another flight of stone steps, up which we clambered, and then emerged upon a scene of singular quaintness and beauty. The town seemed hived upon the steep jagged sides of an amphitheatre of rocks; the houses were perched one above another, the flat roofs of those below forming the balconies and courts of those above, and sometimes the most easy mode of access from one to the other. From the rear of the uppermost tier of houses the cliff rises precipitously to a height of about 200 feet. We scrambled now up steep steps, now through tunnels partly of natural rock, partly artificial, amid crags, caverns, and fissures, until we were told that we had arrived at the house

of the sheikh, where a number of women were collected to receive us, and immediately began to bustle about and prepare a room for our reception.

We stabled our steeds in a cave, and went out to see the place before it was too dark, threading our way amid the labyrinthine alleys which wound up and down and in and out of the rocks and houses.



MALULA.

Below us the gorge expanded into a richly-cultivated well-watered valley, where fruitful gardens supplied the town with their wealth of produce. We crossed the clear stream which gushed from the mountain-side amid the most luxuriant verdure and under overhanging foliage, and looking back could gain a better idea of the singular conformation by

which we were surrounded. We found that a fissure in the range corresponding to the one by which we had dived into the town, cleft the rocks further to the north, thus making a craggy precipitous shoulder between the two, where the rocks and houses mingled in grotesque confusion. There was a sort of tunnel entrance by this chasm, similar to the one which we had traversed, and at its cavernous mouth was perched the orthodox Greek monastery of Mar Thecla. In this cave a chapel has been built in which is shown the spot where St Thecla suffered martyrdom. She was a disciple of St Paul, according to the legends, and fled to this place to escape from her infidel father. Her picture is in the niche where they say her body lies. There is a Greek inscription on it, saying that she was the first martyr of her sex, and contemporary with the apostles. The monastery on the top of the rock at the point we had descended was the Greek Catholic monastery of Mar Serkis. The monks are celebrated for the excellent wine which they manufacture. All round were ancient rock-tombs, and the caves which in old time were occupied by hermits. In the days of Sir John Mandeville, who visited Malula at the end of the fourteenth century, it seems to have been a nest of hermits, who have long since died out; but from time immemorial it has been esteemed a place of great sanctity, and the monasteries to this day are much resorted to on certain religious

festivals by pilgrims from all parts of Syria, and have in consequence become immensely wealthy. There are only two Moslem families in the town, which is otherwise exclusively Christian, of the orthodox or Greek Catholic persuasion. It is a curious thing that the women of these two Moslem families do not cover their faces, thus falling into the custom of the majority. The converse of this is to be seen in all Moslem towns where there are only a few Christian families, and where the Christian women adopt the Moslem custom of veiling themselves rather than appear singular in their dress. Malula contains nearly 2000 inhabitants, and the whole population, together with that of the two small neighbouring villages of Bakha and Jubadin, speak the old Syriac. A few rites peculiar to the ancient Jacobites are still observed here in marriage ceremonies, both by Moslems and Christians, though the latter now belong to the orthodox and Greek Catholic Churches. In the course of our rambles we met a priest, who told us that he always performed the service in the Syriac language.

I listened with great interest to the musical sounds of this almost extinct tongue. It is probably very nearly identical with that spoken as the colloquial language of Palestine in the time of our Lord. It was the language in which He taught, and therefore possesses associations of a character to which no other tongue can lay claim. When we returned to

our eyrie for the night, the women were gabbling in it with great volubility. They told us that most of the inhabitants could speak Arabic, but that they always used Syriac in their familiar intercourse, though it was not taught in the school. It is to be feared, therefore, that in a few years it will have taken its place in the list of dead languages. The sheikh himself was absent, but the door of the women's apartments opened upon the roof, which formed our dining-room, and exhibited a curious domestic scene, the children lying asleep, innocent of attire—and the females, whose relationship to the sheikh I could not exactly discover, pursuing their maternal and other avocations, entirely regardless of our presence. We lingered long on this interesting house-top, for the light of a brilliant moon shed its soft lustre over the wild scene, and the ghostly shadows of projecting crags and pinnacles melted into the gloom of the cracks and caverns. At last the glimmering of lamps and the sound of voices gradually died away into a sort of fantastic stillness, until we almost expected to see phantoms emerge, and a life in keeping with the weird surroundings take the place of that which had gone to rest.

Our way next morning led down the cultivated valley for a short distance, and then turned to the right through groves of pistachio-trees, the cultivation of the nut being one of the principal industries

of the place. The hillsides were also covered with vine and shumach trees. From the latter is made the yellow dye with which the leather of slippers or *babooshes* is coloured. For three hours we rode over a dreary but partially cultivated plain, keeping along the base of a low serrated range of sandstone; while to the left, the burning plain stretched away to the Jebel Abul Ata, from the southern slopes of which I had already looked across the desert which extends to the Euphrates. The convent of Sednaya, perched on a crag, which is surrounded by the village of the same name, was a welcome sight, for it was to be our mid-day halt; and leaving our ponies at the foot of the long flight of stone steps that leads up the side of the rock to the convent, we obtained admittance from the nuns, and were shown by the lady superior into the apartment provided for the reception of guests. It was a delightful, airy room, commanding an extensive view in all directions; and from an adjoining roof we were indiscreet enough to try and peep into the nuns' quarters, which formed one side of a long, narrow courtyard. With the exception of two or three elderly females, our curiosity was not gratified—the young ones, if there were any, remaining in seclusion. The old lady who did the honours, and gave us some excellent wine and other comestibles, informed us that the convent contained forty nuns; that it was 1500 years old; and that,

at certain times of the year, it was one of the most frequented resorts for pilgrims in Syria. This is due to the virtues of a miracle-working Madonna, whose picture is in the church, and who possesses the special faculty of increasing the population in cases where a wife incurs the disgrace of having no offspring, or only daughters. Hence female devotees, desirous of making their lords happy, flock hither in great numbers, and, according to popular account, with great success, and the convent profits pecuniarily in consequence.

Traffic of this peculiar description is not confined in Syria to religious establishments, but the *exploitation* of feminine credulity is successfully carried on by individual miracle-mongers, who are supposed to possess the art of dealing with this mysterious problem of nature. A celebrated professor of it not long since accumulated a large fortune and acquired a great reputation by a very simple trick. Upon being applied to for assistance, he invariably prophesied the wished-for result, at the same time writing, in an obscure corner of the house, a prediction to the effect that the coming event would not be a son, but a daughter. If it turned out a son he said nothing of the written prediction, and passed for a great seer; if, on the other hand, a daughter arrived, he explained that he was well aware that such would be the case, but not wishing to hurt the feelings of the parents by an unneces-

sarily premature disappointment, he had contented himself with writing it secretly,—and now triumphantly revealed the written prophecy. The convent church contains some wretched pictures, for the most part too obscene to be described, and rendering it a particularly inappropriate place, one would imagine, for women to worship in. The picture of the Virgin, possessing the miraculous power, is supposed to have been painted by Luke the evangelist; and it is popularly believed by those who reverence it to consist half of stone and half of flesh; but nobody cares to verify this statement, as to look upon the image portrait is said to produce instantaneous death. The ecclesiastical writers of the Greek Church identify Sednaya with the ancient Danaba mentioned by Ptolemy, and also recorded as the seat of a bishop in the 'Notitiæ Ecclesiasticæ.' In a Greek convent which I once visited in Moldavia, the comparative seclusion practised by the nuns of Sednaya did not exist; and I have no doubt that, had we been able to prolong our visit, their coyness here would have worn off. We were obliged, however, to content ourselves with an hour's rest, during which we entirely exhausted the lady superior's conversational resources.

On the east side of the rock on which the monastery is situated are some ancient rock-cut tombs, and further down on the slope is a square tower, evidently very ancient, probably Roman, and per-

haps a tomb; it is known as Mar Butrus er Rasûl, or the Apostle Peter, and stands on a basement of three steps. It is 30 feet square and 26 feet high. Each wall consists of ten courses of finely-hewn stone. On the south side is a small aperture surrounded by a moulding, and closed with an iron door, which was locked. After some trouble we found the guardian, who let us in; but except a few poor modern pictures and some goods which had been put into it, apparently as a warehouse, it was empty. The roof was vaulted. As we passed through the somewhat squalid village we saw a wedding-party. The bride was a pretty girl, dressed in a very becoming jacket, trimmed with gold embroidery; her forehead and neck were hung with coins and jewellery, and her skirt was of bright scarlet. Her attendant maidens were similarly decorated and attired, and they formed a bright and picturesque group.

After an hour and a half of hot ride across the Sahara we suddenly dived into the refreshing pool of green verdure, on the edge of which is situated the village of Menin. A copious fountain of crystal water welled from the base of the cliff, with volume enough to be applied to mill purposes at its source, and to be subdivided into innumerable streamlets for irrigation. Under the shade of a grove of tall poplars all the women of the village were assembled, each with a spinning-wheel, chatting in picturesque groups

by the side of the gurgling stream, and very much interfering with our bathing operations—for it was impossible after our hot ride to resist a plunge into this delightful fountain. In the cliffs overhead were numerous rock-tombs and chambers; while the remains of what was probably once a temple, proved that from ancient times the attractions of the "source" of Menin had been appreciated. The valley widened as we rode down it. The temperature had sensibly changed for the better. In places the road passed between damp banks on which grew creepers, ferns, and mosses, while walnut and fruit trees lent a most grateful shade. We could scarcely realise the fact that half an hour before we had been on a desert without a patch of green visible, so potent is the magic touch of water. We luxuriated in these delightful shades for a couple of hours, and then once more the scene changed and we entered a savage gorge, along the rocky side of which the water was carried in an aqueduct. It is so narrow that we had to ride along the natural bed of the brook which carried off in winter the superfluous water. This romantic chasm, devoid of all vegetation, separates the range of Jebel Kasiun from that of Jebel Kalamûn, and at its outlet we reach Berzeh. A Moslem legend makes this the birthplace of Abraham; while, according to another tradition, it is the point to which he penetrated when he pursued the captors of his brother Lot "unto Hobah which is on the left of

Damascus," and succeeded in rescuing him. It does not seem to me in the least to answer the description; but the whole neighbourhood of Damascus is so replete with Biblical association that the uncertainty in regard to detail can never deprive it of the peculiar interest which every salient feature must possess. As the evening shadows were lengthening we found ourselves once more on the verge of that vast expanse of green, in the centre of which the domes and minarets of the brilliant city were glittering in the setting sun; and spurring our willing steeds over the well-worn roads which converge to it as a common centre, we regained, in another hour, its comparative civilisation.

Having, under the supervision of Midhat Pasha, elaborated a scheme for the colonisation of that district of his *vilayet* which I had fixed upon to the east of the Jordan, and received his Highness's assurances that if I could get it approved at Constantinople he would offer me every assistance in his power to carry it out, I had nothing more to detain me at Damascus, and started with Mr Chirol on my return to Beyrout by way of the Kasrawan, and some of the wildest and most picturesque valleys of the Lebanon. In order to avoid the heat of the day, we rode by moonlight to Shtora, a village and post-station which lies upon the French *diligence* route, half-way between Damascus and Beyrout. It is situated at the foot of the eastern slope of the

Lebanon, and on the edge of the great valley or rather plain of the Buka'a. A road practicable for wheeled vehicles leads from here along the plain to Baalbec, distant about forty miles — a pleasant road, for the first hour skirting the lower Lebanon spurs, and winding between hedges of roses in bloom and through richly cultivated country. We turned off from it before it became hot and dull, at the village of Muallaka, celebrated as containing the mortal remains of Noah, whose tomb is shown to the credulous stranger. Its dimensions are 104 feet long by 10 broad, and it conveys some idea of the size of the human race before they evolved backwards as it were to their present dimensions. We did not, however, visit his tomb, which is much reverenced both by Christians and Moslems, but turned into the gorge down which plunges the brawling Berduni, to the picturesque town of Zahleh. The towns of Muallaka and Zahleh meet in this gorge, which is scarce a mile long — the former spreading out at its *débouchure*, and the latter clinging to the steep sides of the valley, where it widens above the gorge. Muallaka is a purely Moslem village, while Zahleh contains a population of 15,000 inhabitants, amongst whom there is only one Moslem family. The narrow street which separates these contiguous towns forms also the boundary of the province. Muallaka is in the *vilayet* of Syria, and is governed by Midhat

Pasha from Damascus; while Zahleh is the largest and most important town in the province of the Lebanon, and is governed from Baabda, the seat of administration of Rustem Pasha. As we approach it, we are at once struck by the absence of minarets, and the presence of domes and crosses, for it boasts of no less than eighteen churches, with a fanatical, fighting population, of whom two-thirds are Greek orthodox, and one-third Maronite, who all vehemently oppose the introduction of Protestant missionary schools. There is one notwithstanding, presided over by an English lady. In 1860 the turbulent propensities of the inhabitants were fully gratified, for the Druses came down upon them, and the place suffered terribly. It is a lovely, peaceful-looking spot now, with its well-built whitewashed houses picturesquely clustering upon the steep hillsides, their piazzas and balconies with their high columns perched one above the other; while the Berduni, issuing from a romantic chasm in the Lebanon, plunges down to the second gorge below, turning in its impetuous course a quantity of corn-mills, and irrigating a small flat area which is hemmed in by the steep surrounding hills, and is thickly planted with tall poplars. Thither we descended to seek a cool retreat from the noonday sun, and found ourselves in a labyrinth of intersecting streamlets and rope-walks. Higher up, where the valley becomes narrow, enterprising purveyors of public recreation

have erected *cafés*, where the citizens resort in the cool of the evening, and, perched on stages over the torrent, sip "mastic" or *raki*, and eat raw gherkins to stimulate their palates, singing their uproarious and discordant native songs while they play draughts or dominoes. The streets are so steep and rough that it is far easier to walk than to ride; but there is, in fact, nothing of interest to see in Zahleh beyond the extreme beauty of its position, and its general air of prosperity and comfort.

As Zahleh does not boast of any place of entertainment for strangers, we were put up by a private family; and from the roof of the house, or rather the house below ours, revelled in a charming view while the ladies of the establishment were preparing our repast. They were two good-looking sisters, both married; but she who was our hostess blushed at the disgrace which she felt attended her admission, when, in answer to our inquiries, she told us she had no children. Her sister, who was ostentatiously nursing a fat baby, looked at her with compassion, and I think tried to make some excuse for this omission; but although my friend and travelling companion was a tolerable Arabic scholar, he felt hardly up to pursuing the subject. They gave us an excellent dinner, and the neighbouring gossips gathered round to see us eat, sitting on their heels, and gazing at us admiringly. The furniture of a Syrian house is limited to mats, and quilts, and cushions; and the

attitude of its occupants, when they are not on their heels, is necessarily more or less recumbent. Ours was invariably so — as, until one is accustomed to it, heels are uncomfortable to sit upon permanently. So far as the charms of female society are concerned, a Christian's house is a more amusing one to lodge in than a Moslem's, but then you have to pay for it. It is much more difficult to satisfy the pecuniary expectations of Christians than of Moslems: indeed, one would imagine that it was rather the Koran than the Bible which denounced the love of money as being the root of all evil—so much keener are Christian than Moslem cupidities; but as the result of a more enlightened financial selfishness is a higher state of civilisation, I suppose it should be encouraged. Unless we can stimulate the Moslem to devote his whole energies to preying upon his neighbour, and can increase his greed for money and his necessities generally, the cause of reform in Turkey is hopeless. I am not now speaking of the bureaucratic class, who have been either educated in Europe or taught by contact with enlightened foreigners how "to turn an honest penny,"—but of the simple peasantry and provincial folk generally, who are not mixed up in administrative vices, and who suffer from the absence of those avaricious instincts which enable Christians to thrive and prosper when the Moslem earns but a scanty living—not because he is less industrious, but because he is less covet-

ous and astute. These considerations occurred to me on the following morning, as my charming and agreeable hostess pouted indignantly at the ridiculously large present she received in proportion to the service she had rendered. The unsophisticated Moslem—where Cook's tourists have not penetrated and introduced civilised ideas — would have been bowed down with gratitude with half the amount.

Zahleh stands at an elevation of about 3000 feet above the sea-level, and from it we immediately began to rise; for we were clambering up the shoulder of the Jebel Sennin, the snow-clad mountain so familiar to those who gaze at the Lebanon range from the balconies of the hotels at Beyrout, and which attains an altitude of over 8300 feet. We soon left the vineyards behind us—for Zahleh is the most important wine-growing place in the Lebanon—and toiled up the steep grassy slopes for an hour and a half, until we found ourselves among patches of snow, and over 6000 feet above the sea. Here rhododendrons in full bloom were abundant, while violets and forget-me-nots peeped out from between the rocks. From the ridge we had a magnificent view back over the Buka'a and Cœlesyria; while at our feet lay stretched the wild gorges and valleys of the Kasrawan district, which we were about to explore, with the sea in the dim distance. We kept along this ridge in a northerly direction, with snowy Jebel Sennin towering above us on our

right, for some time before we began to descend into the grand amphitheatre of the Wady Sennin. Here rocks rose precipitously all round, and streams dashed tumultuously down them, ultimately to join the Nahr-el-Kelb or Dog River. We scrambled along the narrow ledges, looking down giddy heights, until we came to a precipice formed by an extraordinary mass of cracked limestone: it was rent by deep fissures to its base, while it projected in crags and pinnacles of the strangest form, amid which our path led. These crags were curiously fluted and honeycombed by the action of the weather; and here and there a *crevasse* yawned beneath our feet with apparently no bottom. The grey of the rock, and the fantastic forms of its gigantic masses, contrasted wonderfully with the dark-green of the pine-foliage which mingled with it; while lower down, expanses of light-green mulberry cultivation indicated that we were once more approaching the abode of man. After a delicious bath in a crystal stream, we crossed another ridge, and over the whole side of the hill we were descending, we saw well-built, comfortable-looking houses scattered, peeping out of masses of luxuriant vegetation, and inviting us to a mid-day halt, of which we began to stand in need. This was the village of Bestimka. We had scarcely entered it before we were most warmly but not disinterestedly pressed by a well-to-do householder to dismount in his garden. He spread mats for us

under the shade of his fruit-trees, supplied us with sour milk, which, together with the viands we had brought with us, served for our lunch; and we could not help contrasting the ease and comparative wealth with which we were surrounded, with the more poverty-stricken and squalid aspect of the villages in which we had been lately sojourning in the Anti-Lebanon.

For the remainder of the afternoon our ride was enchanting: along terraces covered with mulberry, amid crags down which cascades dashed and to which pine-trees clung, between hedges of roses, and under the shade of wide-spreading walnut-trees, till we found ourselves in another noble amphitheatre, the lower portion of which was richly cultivated; and in the midst of its gardens we looked with interest on our night-quarters—the village of Mezra'a. We had not met many travellers during our day's march, but our first question had always been when we did meet one, "How far is it to Mezra'a?" and our second, "Who is the best man there to go to for lodging?" We never received two replies in the least degree similar to the first query; while every one seemed to concur in the opinion that for hospitality there was no one to compare with Abdulla, the son of Jirius the priest. So, on entering the village, we immediately made inquiry for Abdulla, and half-a-dozen volunteers to find him were soon forthcoming; for it seemed well known that at that moment

he was not at home. Soon he appeared, a handsome, pleasant-featured man, delighted at the importance with which our arrival invested him, and well pleased, no doubt, to show us the magnificence of the accommodation which he could place at our disposal. It turned out to be nothing less than an entire mansion, newly built, and which, though it was neatly furnished with mats, had never been occupied. We stabled our horses in the lower floor, while we ascended to the upper by a flight of steps on the outside, leading to a veranda commanding a delightful view. Three or four spacious rooms opened out of this, and of one of these we took possession, while Abdulla, the son of Jirius the priest, sent for some women-kind from his father's house, which seemed to be his present abode. Afterwards, when we became more intimate with him, he explained to us that he was to be married next year to a young lady in the neighbourhood, and that he had built this house in anticipation of the happy event. In the meantime, he introduced us to his sister, who came carrying a basket of tender mulberry-leaves—for the whole female population was engaged in providing for the wants of the young silk-worms; and having seen our room made comfortable, we started off under our host's escort to pay a visit to Jirius the priest himself.

There is no street or collection of houses grouped closely together in these higher Lebanon villages,

but they are for the most part scattered among mulberry-plantations over the hillsides. Mezra'a contained about 1500 inhabitants, and its gardens and vineyards covered a considerable area. The silk-culture forms the principal industry of the inhabitants. At the period of our visit the worms were just out, and infinitesimally small. Only the youngest and tenderest leaves were being gathered for them, which girls were neatly and tightly packing away in hand-baskets, while others were engaged in the less elegant occupation of smearing large flat trays with cow-dung; and before each house numbers of these trays were drying in the sun, preparing to be the first home of silk-worms. When we arrived at the house of Jirius the priest, his daughter brought us out a trayful to inspect. The old man himself was seated on his balcony smoking a *narghilé*, and enjoying the soft evening air and the lovely view. He was a venerable patriarch, retired from active sacerdotal functions, and apparently spending a peaceful old age in the bosom of his family. The whole population of this village was Maronite; and strolling through it we came upon one of the churches—a massive square building, which had been in old time a Metawaly fort. We were joined here by the priest who officiated in it,—a jovial, middle-aged man, who turned out somewhat of a wag, and who appeared to be esteemed not so much for his saintly character as for his wealth—

Abdulla informing me, in an undertone of the deepest respect, that he was worth a sum equivalent to £4000, and was the richest man in the village. Indeed Maronite clergy as a rule, unlike the priesthoods elsewhere, are the richest class in the country; and it is doubtless largely owing to this fact that they exercise so powerful a political influence on their flocks. When, in addition to controlling the consciences of their congregations, they can also control their pockets, it is evident that, by a judicious system of spiritual and temporal squeezing, they may increase both their capital and their influence to any extent. Individually, they are often large landed proprietors; while, collectively, the Church owns a most undue proportion of territory.

From the ridge on which we sat under the shadow of the village church, we could see one episcopal residence, and several convents and monasteries, all occupying the most beautiful sites; for it must be owned the Church has an eye for the picturesque, and all representing large landed possessions, and accumulated wealth. To live upon their flocks like leeches, and to stimulate their religious bigotry and fanaticism, seems to be the principal function of the Maronite priesthood. No doubt there are excellent and devoted men among them, but all the practical difficulty of administering the Lebanon is created by the Church; and a turbulent bishop, whom it had been found necessary to exile, was, at the time of

my visit, keeping the whole country in a ferment. The priest took me into the lower part of the curious old building which was now used as a church, and showed me the vault which in old times served as a place of refuge for the defenders. It had been supplied with water by a subterranean passage, which had fallen into disrepair, and it communicated with the room above, which was now the church, by a trap-door. The walls were several feet thick, and composed of huge blocks of stone. My reverend guide, who had been smoking and laughing somewhat boisterously at his own jokes, now took me round to the door of the church, laid his cigarette temporarily on the door-sill, and with an instantaneous change of manner, proceeded to kneel and pray vigorously while I inspected the internal decorations, which were of the rudest description. Out of consideration for his cigarette I did not stay long, so as to enable him to finish his prayers and return to it before it went out—a feat he succeeded in achieving, picking it up as well as his jokes at the point where he had been temporarily obliged to suspend them for devotional purposes.

On our return to our lodging we found a sumptuous repast prepared for us; and Abdulla, the son of Jirius the priest, had provided wine of the best, and turned out to be of a most convivial temperament, and much discomposed at the comparative rapidity with which we despatched our meal; for he had evi-

dently anticipated making a night of it in feasting and drinking. He ate principally with his fingers, which was possibly one reason why he could not keep up with us; but then he also talked incessantly, and was extremely interested in political matters, and especially desirous to know whether Syria was not about to be occupied by England or France, or possibly by both. Throughout the Lebanon, the idea seems firmly fixed in the minds of the people that they are to pass shortly under the domination of a Western Power,—a prospect they look forward to with great eagerness. The Maronites would naturally, for the most part, prefer that that Power should be France; but the Greek orthodox and the Druses would hail with delight the advent of a British army of occupation. The entire Maronite population of the Lebanon does not exceed 150,000. Abdulla told us that there were many persons in the village who owned property to the amount of £1000; and, indeed, gave us to understand that he had more than that himself. On the whole, he professed himself satisfied with the *régime* under which he lived, admitting that he enjoyed protection of life and property, and had nothing to complain of. His idea of a French occupation was merely based upon the vague notion that it would bring more money into the country; but it seemed to me that the Maronites had quite as much money as was good for them, considering how fond they were of it, and how easily,

notwithstanding, they allowed themselves to be robbed of it by the Church.

A small boy came and danced and sang before us ere we finally turned in; and the usual group of admiring females lingered to the last moment, while Abdulla disappeared reluctantly, evidently feeling that it might be long ere he should be able again to provide himself with such a good dinner, in his own house, at somebody else's expense. For his hospitality was equal to that of a first-class hotel, so far as prices went, though they took the form, not of paying a bill, but of making presents; so that in our cordial adieux the next morning, we were able to keep up the fiction that we had been indebted to him for a generous and disinterested hospitality, and parted from him as from one who had conferred upon us deep and lasting obligations.

CHAPTER XVII.

RUINS OF KALAT FAKRA—THE NATURAL BRIDGE—MAGNIFICENT SCENERY—AFKA—THE TEMPLE OF ADONIS—WE ARE BENIGHTED—ARRIVAL AT GHAZIR—NIGHT QUARTERS—POLITICAL DISCUSSIONS—MARONITE VIEWS—ECCLESIASTICAL CUPIDITIES—THE NAHR-EL-KELB—INSCRIPTIONS—DEPARTURE FROM BEYROUT.

For an hour and a quarter after leaving Mezra'a, we continued to ascend through vineyards, mulberry-plantations, and wheat-fields carefully irrigated upon the steep hillsides, till we reached an elevation of above 6000 feet, when the cultivation nearly ceased, and on its verge, amid a pile of limestone crags, came upon the ruins of Kalat Fakra, which, considering their extent and importance, do not seem to have received the attention they deserve. A few hundred yards to the left of the limestone rocks, and standing by itself, was a large square tower, partly ruined, which was possibly an old Roman fort, on the portal of which appears an inscription that contains the name of the Emperor Claudius. The huge masses of rock that separate this tower from the temple, which has been carved out of them, are most fantastic in form, and in places one is

almost at a loss to know what is natural and what artificial. The temple, the walls of which are composed of the solid rock, is twenty yards by forty, and its area is now filled with fragments of columns, carved blocks, and square masses of stone. The façade apparently consisted of a portico supported by six massive columns. The carved pedestals of three of these are still standing, but the columns themselves are broken and prostrate. The outer court was thirty yards square, and a portion of the side walls was composed of the natural rock *in situ.* A row of smaller columns, all in fragments, formed the façade. About a hundred yards to the south, near a small stream, were the remains of another smaller building, the lower portion of the massive walls of which were still standing. It was divided by a transverse wall,—one enclosure, which was probably the inner temple, being seven yards square; the other was the outer court, ten yards square. On the borders of the stream were massive stones in such a position as to suggest that a reservoir had in ancient times existed here; and all round were strewn fragments of columns and carved blocks. We lingered longer over these interesting remains than we should have done had we realised the length and difficulty of the journey before us, and we suffered for it later in the day; but my companion could not resist a sketch, and I found abundant occupation in making the rough measurements,

which, however, are only approximative, as I had no tape, and it was impossible to pace areas so filled up with huge masses of rock that it was necessary literally to climb across them; and I did not then know that they had been examined and described by M. Ernest Renan. The temple, according to an inscription which he copied, is dedicated to *θεός μέγιστος*, "The Great God," and dates from the year A.D. 43. Kalat Fakra was supplied with water led over a low hill from the Neba-el-Leben, or milk spring, about two miles distant. We followed the conduit to this spot, and found a magnificent stream gushing out of the base of the precipitous limestone range with a force and volume sufficient to turn a dozen mills. From here it dashes down in a roaring cataract till it disappears from view in a limestone chasm, where it precipitates itself in a fall of about a hundred feet. One can walk up to this fall from below, but the rocks almost meet overhead, approaching each other so closely just below the fall, that an active man with good nerves could easily spring across. It was, in fact, a feat which would have been eminently tempting in the days of one's youth; and even at a more mature period of life, I felt doubtful whether one ought to resist the instinct which seems implanted by nature of risking one's neck for the fun of the thing. But the object which from this point riveted our attention was the Jisr el Hajar, a huge natural bridge which spanned the

gorge a hundred yards or so below the chasm, at an elevation of about a hundred feet from the bed of the torrent. The gorge here is about a hundred and fifty feet across, and the bridge itself is so broad and level that a good carriage-road could be made over it. It is, in fact, a flat piece of limestone rock, from ten to fifteen feet thick, but on the under side it is so perfectly arched as almost to seem artificial. The regular path leads across this bridge, but we had deviated from it in order to visit the spring above. Below the bridge the stream dashes down between precipitous walls of limestone by a series of cascades until it reaches the valley far below, where it is divided into streamlets for irrigating purposes ; and the luxuriant hillsides bear testimony to its fertilising influence. The whole scene was inexpressibly grand and interesting, and well worth a journey in itself. I am indebted to Mr Chirol for the accompanying sketch. When we add to this wonder of nature and the romantic scenery which surrounds it, the interest that attaches to the remains of an ancient civilisation which lie thickly strewn in the immediate vicinity, it is a matter of surprise that the attractions which they afford should have been allowed to remain so neglected, and that, in these days of enterprising travel, this part of the Lebanon should still be comparatively so little known and explored. For half an hour after leaving the natural bridge we traverse a wild rocky country to the Neba-el-Asal, or honey



THE NATURAL BRIDGE.

spring, a magnificent jet of water which gushes out from below the road. It is neither so full in volume nor so picturesque in its source as the milk spring, but it contributes a copious water-supply to the rich valley below. Both these springs are sources of the Dog River, or Nahr-el-Kelb, which was called by the Greeks the Lycus, or Wolf River, and which empties itself into the sea about ten miles to the north of Beyrout.

We now traversed a wild desolate region till we came to a patch of cultivation surrounded on all sides by precipitous craggy hills called Shobrah. There are no houses here, but the peasants come up and cultivate it from the nearest village, frequently camping overnight. We scarcely see how we are to get out of this walled-in vale, so steep are the hills all round; and although we are at an elevation of about 6000 feet above the sea, the mid-day sun is blazing down upon us, and glaring upon the white rocks up which we are to scramble. It is not a tempting prospect, but there is evidently no escape, except by sheer climbing; so we dismount and reluctantly brace ourselves to the effort. For nearly an hour do we toil up the abominable apology for a path, driving our ponies before us—the flat plates of iron with which they are shod scraping and slipping over the smooth sloping surface of the rock—till we reach the crest, and then are blandly informed by our guide that he has lost his way. This would have

been excusable in a guide whom we had brought from a distance — for goat-paths are not easily distinguishable from real ones on these wild mountain-sides; but inasmuch as we had taken great trouble at Mezra'a to find a man who knew the country, and as we were now not above six hours distant from his permanent home, we felt justly indignant, perhaps more so because we were so excessively tired and hot with a climb, part of which we now began to find was unnecessary; so we had to hark back, passing two very curious punch-bowls, which were perfectly round and looked like craters of extinct volcanoes. We had actually reached the snow, but we were rewarded by a magnificent view over the valley of the Adonis or Nahr Ibrahim, and slightly consoled by a curious and very picturesque bit of scenery which we should not otherwise have seen. When we got back to the place where the right path diverged we had a second climb to the crest, and then commenced a descent more villanous if possible than the road by which we had mounted. We now began to long for signs of a habitation and a halting-place: there can be no doubt that the most exquisite scenery to a certain extent loses its charm if one looks at it on an empty stomach.

In places during our journey to-day there had been almost a carpet of wild flowers. Where the rocks gave them room they bloomed luxuriantly.

Many of them I did not know by name, but I recognised the burnet, the sword-flag, especially among the young crops, where there were any—and wild flax, and a fine specimen of Persian iris. When we got to the bottom of the hill we found ourselves upon a ledge or natural terrace overlooking the gorge of the Adonis, and along this we rode for an hour and a half to the head of the valley; for above all things we had set our hearts upon seeing Afka, once the abode of the Goddess of Love, and the source of the Adonis; and we had determined not to linger by the way, even to eat, until we had reached it. And when at length, on turning the angle of a projecting spur, the sacred, or perhaps, more properly speaking, the profane, spot burst suddenly upon us, it was impossible to withhold an exclamation of astonishment and delight; and we felt it incumbent upon us to pause, even at the expense of suffering nature, in order thoroughly to take in the marvellous and unique beauty of the scene. We found ourselves on the lip of a bowl from which the river issued through a gorge, and which was almost completely surrounded by sheer cliffs, varying in height from one to two thousand feet, their crevices filled with snow, and here and there a hardy pine clinging to the jutting crags. A couple of hundred feet below us the small circular area was a mass of vegetation, consisting chiefly of walnut, oak, and juniper trees; while there were patches of cultivation appertaining

to a squalid Metawaly village, just peeping out from under the foliage at the head of the gorge. By the side of the stream near the base of the cliff a clump of walnut-trees indicated the site of the once celebrated temple; and close to it was a picturesque bridge, from under which the torrent plunges in a mass of foam, and then precipitates itself in three cascades into the gorge below; but the most remarkable feature is the main source itself, which issues from a deep cavern in the side of the cliff by a fall of about forty feet. It is joined by two other smaller streams, which also break their way out of the side of the rock at some height above its base, forming altogether a combination of springs so singular for situation, and surrounded by such a weird and fantastic natural formation, that it was no wonder it appealed to the æsthetic imaginations of the votaries of Venus, and became the scene of a touching mythological episode. It became worse than this; for in this temple of Apheca, beneath the crumbling walls of which we halted for our scanty meal, those rites sacred to the goddess took place, which at last became so impure that the temple itself, which, according to Lucian, who visited it in the days of its celebrity, was built by Cinyras, was destroyed by the Emperor Constantine. Where we lunched on the margin of the brook it was clear as crystal, falling in pellucid cascades from its three-fold source; but it is said that it is occasionally coloured red with

mineral matter, which the ancients regarded as the blood of Adonis, shed by the wild boar before he was sought for and resuscitated by Aphrodite. While the cult of the goddess had its seat at Apheca, that of Adonis took place at Byblos, the modern Jibeil, situated about four miles to the north of the mouth of the river which bore the name of the god. There can be little doubt that the legend sprang from the early Phœnician worship of the dual principle. For Byblos was said to have been founded by Baal Kronos, a Phœnician monarch; and it is not difficult to trace the connection between the early Canaanitish religion of Baal and Ashteroth with the myth of Osiris and Isis and the legend of Venus and Adonis. Aphek, in the land assigned by Joshua to, but never occupied by, the tribe of Asher, has been identified with Afka, or Apheca.

We regretted that we had not time thoroughly to explore a spot so enchanting in itself, and invested with traditions and associations of so interesting a character. Unfortunately we had lingered too long over the ruins of Kalat Fakra in the morning; and the delay involved by the subsequent loss of our way had made it problematical whether we should succeed in reaching our night-quarters at all. This would not have signified had we kept our baggage-mule with us, but we had sent him by a short cut to the town of Ghazir, which we had fixed upon as our sleeping-place; and we now found ourselves, late

in the afternoon, still many hours distant from that spot, with every prospect of having to rough it out on the mountains. There was a Metawaly village, it is true, scarce a mile distant; but the bigotry, squalor, and dishonesty of the Metawalies form a combination so little tempting that the hillside would have been preferable. So we determined to make a push for Ghazir, and reluctantly turned our backs upon the mystic grove amid which the walls of the temple are crumbling. In places these are standing to a height of ten or twelve feet from the ground; and the blocks of which they are composed are so massive that there is no reason why they should not continue to remain as they are until they are toppled over by an earthquake.

We had hoped to explore the valley of the Adonis itself, but our guide told us there was no possibility of taking a horse through the narrow gorges and chasms by which it forces its way to the sea. He said that even on foot it was difficult and dangerous climbing. But I have no confidence in his accuracy, and would recommend the examination of this valley to the tourist in search of the picturesque. The paths from Afka seem to keep along the tops of the hills on either side; and to our intense disgust we found ourselves, instead of following the stream as we expected, retracing our steps along the ridge for an hour, and then, instead of plunging down into the gloomy gorge, we turned away from it. We saw

enough to tempt us sorely to linger where we were for the night, and make an exploratory dash in spite of the guide in the morning; but unfortunately I was due at Beyrout to catch a steamer, and could only gaze wistfully over a landscape whose secrets have only been partially explored as yet by Renan and one or two other travellers. Still we had no reason to complain; for though our path led us away from the precipitous sides of the gorge of the Adonis, it wound over a shoulder, from the crest of which the view in the evening light was one of exquisite beauty; and from it we descended into a smaller valley, where pendulous forests of oak clung to the hillsides, and the limestone formation cropped out in the strange fantastic forms common to a dolomite region. We had to scramble down stone stairways, the descent seaward now becoming rapid and trying to man and beast. In mercy to ourselves and our animals we dismounted, and one secluded nook again almost induced us to halt; for, nestling among the rocks which enclosed a perfect garden of vines, mulberries, and fruit-trees, were the picturesque abodes of the Maronite peasants, who had settled themselves here high up among the mountains in a tiny amphitheatre, sheltered by woods and rocks, and hidden away from the busy world in a corner of their own. And now, as we traversed another belt of wild uninhabited country, the night began to close in, and in the growing dark-

ness the natural obstacles seemed to assume greater proportions. Every peasant we met added on an hour to the distance still to be traversed, and at last we became so sceptical as to our whereabouts, that we took one of them for an extra guide. We had now crossed over from the valley of the Nahr Ibrahim or Adonis into that of the Nahr Máamilten, a thickly populated and luxuriantly cultivated district, the beauties of which were concealed from us by the darkness; but the numerous lights which twinkled on the hillsides all round, bore testimony to the density of the population. At last, after fifteen hours of saddle and foot scramble, the welcome sounds of a chorus of barking dogs indicated our approach to a large town.

For the last hour the descent had been rocky and precipitous in the extreme, and it was a marvel how our ponies found their way in the darkness along the dangerous ledges and over the steep slippery rocks. But our troubles were not at an end: it was between nine and ten at night, and we had still, in a town of about 8000 inhabitants, to find our mule. We made for the monastery to which the muleteer had been directed, and where we hoped to find accommodation; but after much knocking and shouting, a surly half-dressed ecclesiastic put his head out of the window, and gruffly told us that the monastery was full, and that he had sent away our muleteer hours before, and he did not know where he had gone.

We tried at one or two good-looking houses where the inhabitants had not gone to bed, but they were sleepy and disinclined to be hospitable; and we wandered helplessly about in the dark, objects of suspicion and distrust to innumerable noisy curs. At last a priest, who spoke French, came and took compassion on us. He had a friend, he said, who would take us in, and another friend who would go in search of the muleteer. So he took us to a very nice house, the occupants of which were a young man and a young woman and a baby. The baby was the young man's, and the young woman was his sister-in-law, who was performing the duties of wet-nurse as an act of sisterly accommodation. The wife was not visible, but they both seemed extremely anxious to make us comfortable, and sent out to wake up the chemist and buy us tea. We were to share their apartment with them; but as it was a large one, and the baby was of an amiable and easily soothed type, that did not much matter. In fact, under the circumstances, there seemed no impropriety in our occupying the same room with the young man and his sister-in-law—quite the contrary. I half suspected the priest intended to join us, he seemed so very much at home; and we made ourselves as agreeable as wearied, famished men, in the worst possible temper at there being no immediate prospect of food, could do, when suddenly the news arrived that the mule with all our raiment and

provisions had been found. Our hearts bounded with joy; but our hosts, as the prospect of well-remunerated hospitality vanished, became despondent. We were received with open arms in our new quarters, and had quite a levee after dinner, notwithstanding the advanced hour of the night. The priest turned out a most enlightened and intelligent man; and as we were here at the very headquarters of Maronite feeling and sentiment, it was interesting to hear his political opinions, and those of our host and his neighbours.

I found they differed considerably from those of their religion with whom I had already conversed. As a rule, the instinct of the Maronite is to consider that his religion should be the dominant influence in the Lebanon, and that, practically, the governor-general of the province should be the servant of the Maronite episcopate. Ever since they have enjoyed the special protectorate of the French, their pretensions have become thus exaggerated; and it is only of late, since a republican form of government has modified the clerical influence in the administration of the foreign affairs of France, that the more intelligent section of the Maronites see that they had better enjoy the privileges which now insure them protection and material prosperity, than struggle for an influence which would only increase religious animosities in the Lebanon against them. Notwithstanding the special relations which exist

between England and the Druses, who are the traditional enemies of the Maronites, the latter are most anxious to cultivate the friendship of the British Government; for the more intelligent among them cannot conceal from themselves that, in the present state of France, even French interests in the East might be sacrificed to the intensity of anti-clerical animosity, and the Maronites would find themselves abandoned by their present protectors, on the ground that the tie which binds them to France is rather an ecclesiastical than a political one. The disposition which has recently manifested itself in England to rush to the rescue of any sect in Turkey, provided that it bears the name of Christian, and can draw up petitions complaining of ill-treatment by the Turks, has encouraged the Maronites to believe that, on the sentimental ground of "Cross against Crescent," they would find the sympathies of the Liberal party in England ready to pronounce in their favour, and undertake, if necessary, a religious crusade in their behalf. Indeed, among other sects as well as the Maronites, I found the idea prevalent that a British occupation of Syria was probable. And they indulge in the vague hope that such an occupation would benefit them, and might possibly lead to their ultimate independence; but what race or religion would dominate in the end they are unable to decide—each naturally thinks his own would—though they cannot deny that much

bloodshed must necessarily precede any such result, and that in the meantime they have practically nothing to complain of. My hosts and the priests informed me that popular feeling in Ghazir was pretty equally divided between those who were satisfied with the political condition of things as they are, and with the administration of the existing governor-general, and those who desired to see a change in the executive which should give them a larger share of political power. He believed, and rightly, that any attempt on the part of the Maronites to grasp at more than they have got, would bring them into dangerous collision with other sects, and might lead to injury to the Church. The fact is, the Maronite priesthood is so much better off than any other priesthood in the world, that the less attention they attract to themselves the better. They are all-powerful among their own flocks. Practically every Maronite community is self-governing, and the ecclesiastical interest is dominant. To want to extend that influence over Druses and Greeks would be suicidal, and this the more sensible perceive. But the more ambitious among the bishops are absorbed with a craving for complete rule, and are never satisfied unless their control of the governor-general is supreme. In conversation with Maronites, I failed to discover one substantial cause of grievance. In no part of the world is a peasantry to be seen more happy and prosperous; and how-

ever much the Turkish Government may be to blame in its administration of the Moslem part of its population in other parts of Syria, there can be no doubt that the Maronites of the Lebanon are far better treated than they would be in any country where the head of the State professed the Greek instead of the Mohammedan religion. No doubt this has been due to external pressure, which Western Powers would not dare to apply to a European Power under similar circumstances. On the other hand, it is only fair to give the Maronite Church its due. It carefully feeds and pampers the goose that lays the golden egg. If it knows how to squeeze a pliable peasantry, it is far too wise to oppress or tyrannise over them. Hence Church farms are eagerly sought for, because in good years the tenants get as large a share of the produce as on private estates; while in bad years the liberality of their priestly landlords insures them against the misery too often in store for ordinary farmers. It is a question, therefore, whether they are not better off, treated as children by a priesthood which despoils them with foresight and discrimination, than they would be if left to take care of themselves, a prey to the competitive plundering of the uncontrolled lay usurers of Christian sects generally. As, with the exception of England, there is scarcely any country in Europe which enjoys such complete religious toleration as Turkey, it is evident that a small

sect has great opportunities for favourable development, provided it can be exempted from the onerous pecuniary burdens which the embarrassed financial condition of the empire have rendered necessary.

Since the special regulations of 1860 have imposed upon the Maronites a tax far too light considering the resources of their country, they have, in spite of clerical absorptiveness, been happy and prosperous; but it would be absolutely impossible to deal with all the religious sects in the country in this exceptional manner, considering the present state of the Turkish exchequer.

The two problems, the solution of which underlies all reform in Turkey, are those of religion and revenue. They are both problems which can be far more satisfactorily settled on the spot than from Constantinople; and hence it is that the surest method of introducing reform is by a process of decentralisation. Without giving to other *vilayets* the exceptional privileges which the Lebanon enjoys, the power of the *vali* or governor-general of each province might be increased, while his responsibility to the central government would be proportionally augmented. The *vilayet* might be periodically assessed according to its resources, but the method of collecting the revenue would be a matter for the local government to determine. A provincial administration, presided over by an intelligent governor-general, would be far more competent to

reform existing financial and sectarian abuses than a fluctuating ministry at Constantinople, liable to be acted upon by influences brought to bear by intriguers from those distant provinces hostile to the action of the governor-general. Each *vali* would then feel that his reputation was at stake. He could not plead interference from Constantinople as an excuse for religious persecution or a deficient revenue. If he failed to remedy abuses and give satisfaction he would be alone to blame, and could be at once withdrawn, and the empire would be consolidated by the removal of just causes of discontent springing from intrigues by which powerful men in the provinces can resist any attempt to reform abuses upon which they thrive at the expense of the poorer part of the population.

Many of the evils from which poor Christians suffer arise from the oppression of their wealthy co-religionists. And the Moslem governor is unable to assist the poor Christian in his struggle against the rich one, because the latter has influential friends among the Christian *effendis* at Constantinople, who support him against the Moslem *vali*. Of the two, the Christian governing element at Constantinople is, in some respects, a greater obstacle to reform than the Mohammedan; for the Moslem is a more tolerant man in his treatment of rival Christian sects than those rival Christian sects are of each other; while in the provinces there is no Moslem priesthood to

fatten upon the peasantry of their own religion, nor do rich Moslems squeeze the life-blood out of their co-religionists as rich Christians do. The power of Christians in Turkey, and especially at Constantinople, to co-operate in the work of reform, if they chose to exercise it, is very great; for they fill high offices in every department of State, and take a most active share in the government of the empire. Unfortunately they are the class most open to the corrupt influences which maintain abuses. It is not, therefore, either for them or their co-religionists to denounce as incorrigible oppressors those whose efforts to introduce reform they most persistently thwart.

One or two instances which have come under my own immediate notice will illustrate the influence for evil of the rival sacerdotalisms as they exist in Turkey. A Protestant was murdered not long since under circumstances which left no moral doubt in the minds of those who investigated the case, of the guilt of the man suspected of the crime. I assisted in collecting the evidence, and went through it carefully with those who were charged to examine into the attendant circumstances. The chain of proof was so strong that the man was arrested, and upon one occasion I attended the *medjliss*, upon which the Christian members preponderated, when he was brought up for examination. The prisoner was born of Christian parents, belonging to the ortho-

dox Greek Church, but in early life had come to England, where I had seen him twenty-five years previously, a specimen convert to Protestantism, and making a very good thing out of his conversion. His only hope of escape now consisted in a recantation of this error, and in the profession of an ardent adherence to the Church of his fathers. Conviction then became impossible. The bishop and the entire "orthodox" community of the place in which the murder had been committed took the case up. The head of the police, who was a Moslem, but open to influences, which are doubly powerful where the salaries of officials are not regularly paid, was won; the Christian members of the *medjliss* did not dare to incur the hostility of their co-religionists by an impartial administration of justice when the murdered man was a Protestant, and the murderer a member of the orthodox Church, who had renounced the errors of Protestantism. One or two of the Moslem members proved themselves incorruptible, but they were unable to bring out the facts of the case, because not only the witnesses, but some of the officials who had been charged with the prosecution of it, were threatened by the bishop with his spiritual displeasure if they ventured to press further in the matter; one, consequently, withdrew altogether. And in spite of the most active exertions of those who desired to have a fair trial, which should elicit the truth and bring the criminal to

justice, it was found impossible to proceed with it with any such hope or expectation, and the man was ultimately released on bail, with a verdict which amounted to not proven. Christians allege that it is difficult to bring a Moslem to justice who has murdered a Christian; but it is still more difficult to bring a Christian to justice who has murdered one of a rival sect, if the sect of the murderer predominates in the community. On one occasion I was travelling with a friend in another part of the country when he was robbed by a guide who belonged to the Catholic Church. He had originally been "orthodox," but found it convenient to change his religion; and he had actually been in the service of a Catholic archbishop. It was rumoured that he had been dismissed by his Eminence for misconduct. We put the necessary machinery in motion to have the man caught, and his character and antecedents investigated. It occurred to me that the archbishop could throw considerable light on the subject, and I suggested to the official who was most energetically prosecuting his researches, that we should apply for information and assistance to the head of the Church to which the thief belonged, and in whose service he had been. I was astonished to find my proposal scouted as most injudicious. "Why," said the intelligent and experienced functionary, "the thief is a convert; and so far from helping us to find him, the archbishop, if he knew we were after him, would

do all he could to screen him!" For the credit of the archbishop, I hope this was a libel on his character; but whether it was one or not, it came to pretty much the same thing. We were afraid to risk the experiment in consequence of the notorious manner in which Christian ecclesiastics in Turkey perpetrate injustices and screen crimes, in order to gratify their religious animosities, or to promote their sectarian ends. So far as the Turks are concerned, the most hopeless feature of their case lies in the fact that the wealth of the country is in the hands of their bitterest enemies. It is only natural that, secretly, all Christians, no matter what their position, rank, or sect, should wish for the overthrow of the dominant religion, and that they should take advantage of the power which their financial resources give them, to encompass the destruction of the Moslem, either by corrupting or impoverishing him. Hence it is that Moslems instinctively fear all schemes of reform which shall increase the power of the Christians; and the Christians who are officially employed by the Government are not anxious to see reforms inaugurated, if the result is to improve the administration generally, and so to consolidate the Turkish empire by the prevention of abuses which they now *exploiter* to their own profit. Our late experience in Cyprus is an illustration of this. There can be little doubt that Christians are to be found in that island, who, if they were asked which rule

they preferred, British rule or Turkish, would unhesitatingly reply in favour of the latter.

The Maronites derive their name from a certain heretical monk named Maron, who is said to have lived about 400 years after Christ, and whose heresy consisted in the dogma that Christ was animated by one will only. As the Catholic Church knew to the contrary, his followers, though otherwise Romanists, were compelled to form a sect of their own, and were only subjected to the authority of the Pope about the year 1600, after a Collegium Maronitarum had been founded at Rome, where a number of Maronite scholars distinguished themselves. A thorough investigation as to the nature and composition of the will of the Saviour appears to have enabled them to arrive at a conclusion satisfactory to the Pope; and a reconciliation took place, from which they have, ever since, derived great political benefit and many substantial advantages.

The Maronite Church still possesses many special privileges, including that of reading Mass in Syriac, which answers quite as well as Latin, as nobody can understand it, except at the village of Malula, as I have already described. The inferior clergy also retain the right to marry. The patriarch is elected by the bishops, subject to the approval of Rome. The monasteries in the district round Ghazir, and in the district of Bsherreh, are, some of them, very handsome, and contain about two thousand monks.

In some of them are printing-presses for their liturgies and other works.

Ghazir is beautifully situated at an elevation of twelve hundred feet above the sea, and about four miles distant from it by the road. There are an abundance of churches and monasteries in the town and its neighbourhood. The Italian Capuchin and the Jesuit monasteries occupy the finest situations, and from both magnificent views are to be obtained: to the east, looking up the valley by which we had descended the night before; and to the west over the Bay of Juneh, round which richly cultivated hills teeming with population rise in a verdant amphitheatre, reminding one of the Bay of Naples, while a village resembling Sorrento juts out on a promontory at the other end of the bay. A zigzag carriage-road has been constructed from Ghazir to the beach, though it is difficult to see for what purpose, as no wheeled vehicle, as yet, can approach either end of it. We were very glad to find a mark of civilisation affording such a contrast to the paths over which we had been recently scrambling; and still more pleased to be galloping over the hard sea-beach, halting only at a too tempting spot to take a plunge into the waves. We were now on the highroad from Tripoli to Beyrout, and in a couple of hours after leaving Ghazir reached Nahr-el-Kelb. I was here on familiar ground, but I was glad of the opportunity of visiting it again. The

river, which we had already seen at the wonderful springs that form its source, here forces its way through a picturesque ravine; and high up on the face of the cliff is an old aqueduct, its arches buried in creepers, mosses, and damp vegetation, while the river itself is spanned by a picturesque bridge; and the road, after crossing it, is hewn out of the rock, and overhangs the sea as it winds its way round the projecting promontory. Near the bridge there is an Arabic inscription on a large slab of rock, announcing that it was restored by Sultan Selim I. (son of Bajasid II.), the conqueror of Syria, in 1520. There is also, not far distant, on the other side of the stream, a Latin inscription cut in the rock, informing us that the pass was hewn by the Emperor Marcus Aurelius.

Here, too, are those nine different rock-carved sculptures which have furnished a fruitful theme of speculation to antiquarians; but there can be little doubt that they record the progress of conquering armies. Three have been recognised as Egyptian, and six as Assyrian.

Sir H. Layard regards the Assyrian sculptures as the work of Sennacherib, whose name he has deciphered in the nearly obliterated inscriptions. Not being an antiquarian, I was only able, with positive certainty, to recognise the one recounting the triumphs of the French army in Syria under General de Hautpol. In consequence of the length and depth of this latter inscription, and the somewhat

submissive attitude of the Assyrian king, who looks as if he was offering something to the French general, that officer has succeeded in conveying to the casual observer the impression that the achievements of his soldiers far surpassed those of a more ancient period, and has thus left an imperishable memorial of the present grandeur of his country.

On the day after my return to Beyrout I left it by steamer for Constantinople, and arrived in that city towards the end of May.

CHAPTER XVIII.

POLITICAL.

I CONFESS I arrived at Constantinople from Syria sanguine that a project, the merits of which had been cordially recognised by the Governor-General of that province, to which it specially applied, would commend itself to the Turkish Government, and that they would at once perceive the political and financial advantages which might be derived from it. By initiating a measure of this character, the Sultan would have manifested a desire to introduce reforms in a part of his dominions in which he was anxious to anticipate the exercise of any interference on the part of England under the Cyprus Convention. While, in addition to increasing the pecuniary resources of his empire at a time when the exchequer stood sorely in need of replenishment, his Majesty would, by taking the lead in a policy which had for its object the restoration of the Jews to the land of their ancestors, have secured their powerful influence in the journalism and finance of Europe and America, and have acquired sympathy and sup-

port from a large section of the British public who are now bitterly hostile to his religion and administration. And here I would remark that the advantages of an alliance with the Jewish race, to any Power likely to become involved in the impending complications in the East, which may possibly involve a general war, appear to have been altogether overlooked by European statesmen. It is evident that the policy which I proposed to the Turkish Government might be adopted with equal advantage by England, or any other European Power. The nation that espoused the cause of the Jews and their restoration to Palestine, would be able to rely upon their support in financial operations on the largest scale, upon the powerful influence which they wield in the press of many countries, and on their political co-operation in those countries—which would of necessity tend to paralyse the diplomatic and even hostile action of Powers antagonistic to the one with which they were allied. Owing to the financial, political, and commercial importance to which the Jews have now attained, there is probably no one Power in Europe that would prove so valuable an ally to a nation likely to be engaged in a European war, as this wealthy, powerful, and cosmopolitan race.

I was the more disposed to hope for a favourable issue to my efforts, because at this time Khaireddin Pasha was Grand Vizier, than whom a more honest, patriotic, and enlightened statesman has not for many

years filled that high office. Nor was I disappointed with the liberal views and clear perception which characterised his appreciation of the administrative necessities of the empire and of the advantages to Turkey of a Jewish alliance. He perceived at once the merits of an experiment that might be made susceptible of further application if its success should be proved on a small scale ; and I had no difficulty in framing a measure which, while it guaranteed the sovereign rights of the Sultan, and met the requirements of Turkish susceptibilities, should at the same time contain all the guarantees necessary for the protection of the colonies from the existing abuses of Ottoman rule.[1]

[1] The scheme was also favourably commented on in some of the local papers. I annex a translation of an article from the 'Semaphore d'Orient :'—

"The project of Mr Oliphant consists in detaching from the 'Mutessariflik' of Nablous the province of Belka, upon the left hand of the Jordan, there to found, with the aid of foreign capitalists, a colony where, in the first instance, the Jewish subjects of H.M. the Sultan would be invited to dwell, as well as any Jews who might desire to establish themselves upon their ancestral soil. They would bring their business intelligence, their industry and their wealth to bear upon the new enterprise, and would give it an energetic and enlightened impulse. It is, above all, to those Mussulman refugees whose fate is the source of constant uneasiness to the paternal government of the Sultan, that Mr Oliphant looks to furnish the popular working element of the youthful colony. By transferring to the Belka some thousands of these sober, enduring, hardy and experienced agriculturists, the success of this great 'model farm' would be insured, and the happiness of these unfortunates, most of whom wander about homeless, hungry, and without occupation, would be secured,

Unfortunately the great qualities of Khaireddin Pasha were precisely those that led to his downfall. No man in his position could hope successfully to contend with the corruption which pervades the

and all the temptations arising from an idle state would be removed from them.

"There is certainly no question of creating an independent province—still less Jewish principality. On the contrary, the colonists would become Ottoman subjects, if they were not so already, and the colony would be governed by an Ottoman governor, according to the general laws of the empire, excepting in certain points wherein the Sublime Porte would be good enough to make some slight concessions necessitated by the enterprise.

"The principal objects of Mr Oliphant's project are to restore to cultivation lands replete with fertile soil, well watered and richly wooded, which are now abandoned to small nomadic tribes from which the empire derives neither material, political, nor fiscal assistance. The new project, on the other hand, would benefit the imperial treasury by the payment of an important sum as the price of the purchase of the land of the colony, as well as by the augmentation of the revenues of the colonised province. The neighbouring lands, too, would profit by the impulse given to agricultural interests, as well as to industry and commerce, by the new enterprise, which would form a 'model farm' destined to serve as an agricultural example to the whole empire, and to assure a refuge for the Moslem refugees. It would also insure to Turkey European sympathies, by offering, under the ægis of the Sultan, an asylum, secure from political and religious passions, to a laborious and docile race which is still persecuted and oppressed in certain European countries. Finally, it would permit the Jews to acquire landed property in their historical fatherland, and thus satisfy the longings which many of them feel for the drawing closer of the ties which bind them to the cradle of their race.

"The works of public utility which belong to the scheme of this project comprise a railway from Haifar to the Jordan—near the Dead Sea—which might ultimately be prolonged to the Gulf of Akaba on the Red Sea.

"Mr Oliphant's project, far from aiming at the constitution of a

administrative system of Turkey, and, above all, to sweep out the Augean stable at Constantinople, without the support of the Sultan; all the worst elements of the bureaucracy and the official class were arrayed against him, and the most strenuous efforts were made to prejudice him in the mind of his sovereign, and to secure his overthrow. It became clear to the "ring" of *backsheesh*-mongers, that if Khaireddin succeeded in carrying out his programme of re-establishing a popular representation by means of chambers at Constantinople, and supporting them by local *medjlisses* popularly elected in the provinces, to which he proposed to grant a larger measure of administrative autonomy than they now enjoy, the days of *backsheesh* would come to an end, while the process of ending them would involve exposures implicating the highest functionaries in the State.

As Khaireddin Pasha's political programme, if it

new State like Roumelia or Bulgaria, would tend to consolidate the Ottoman power in Palestine, and to establish, on a solid basis, the authority of the Sublime Porte in these deserted countries, where it is frequently in conflict with the turbulent nomadic tribes of Bedouins.

"If political reasons, which do not concern us, have prevented the Imperial Government from accepting, till now, a project which had met with the sympathy of all the present Ministers of the Sultan as well as other statesmen of influence—towards which his Majesty himself has evinced his interest by the kindly reception which he gave to Mr Oliphant—we are sure that the day will come when the Sublime Porte will recognise at its true value the philanthropic and essentially non-political idea which dominates this project for Ottoman colonisation."

were put into operation, would have had the effect of placing the authority of the Sultan upon a constitutional instead of an autocratic basis, it was not difficult for his powerful enemies to shake his Majesty's confidence in the disinterestedness of his Minister's intentions, and to exaggerate the dangers that might result to the spiritual as well as temporal *prestige* of the Father of the Faithful if he adopted the progressive policy of his Grand Vizier.

Another very weighty influence opposed to Khaireddin Pasha was that of Russia, which has always strongly supported the underlings in the Palace, and the prejudices dominant there, in their resistance to the introduction of institutions that would reflect by their existence in Turkey, upon the political and social condition of Russia herself, or carry reform into districts which she still desires to annex. It was only to be expected, therefore, that any attempt to introduce a constitutional form of government which should act as a check upon the bureaucratic corruption that characterises the administration of Turkey, should meet with the strongest opposition from a Government based upon the same autocratic system, and tainted by the same official corruption.

The European Powers that were anxious to see these abuses reformed—which are breaking the hearts of the people of all races and religions in Turkey, Moslem as well as Christian, and which must, before long, destroy the empire itself—never attempted

to insist upon the application of this one and only remedy of popular representation, basing their resistance to any proposal of this nature on the purely gratuitous assumption, that institutions which have almost invariably been found efficacious in remedying the grievances of nations in struggling and partially civilised conditions, were totally inapplicable in Turkey, and that that country is less fit for them now than England was six hundred years ago. The result was, that after a ministerial crisis of six weeks, Khaireddin Pasha, attacked by all the influences most hostile to the true welfare of the empire, both from within and from without, and supported only by a local public opinion unable to find constitutional expression, and not strong or united enough to resort to unconstitutional measures, was overthrown, and, as a natural consequence, the destinies of the country fell into the hands of "the ring," composed of corrupt and unscrupulous adventurers, some of whom became the leading members of the new Cabinet, whilst others exercised important functions in the Palace itself. The office of Grand Vizier was practically abolished, as involving too much independent power; and the direct arbitrary and irresponsible authority of the Sultan, and the influence of his immediate personal advisers, became intensified. The most trusted among the latter were those who succeeded most effectually in exciting his suspicions of any proposal emanating

from without, that had for its object the abolition of the abuses upon which they fattened, or the introduction of those admininistrative reforms that they had good reason to dread. Fearful, however, of exasperating those persons interested in maintaining the existence and advancing the material prosperity of the empire, and anxious to deprecate their just indignation at a political change from which it was notorious nothing could be hoped, the new Ministers were profuse in promises and professions, and exhibited an ingenuity in the arts of deception and procrastination worthy of a better cause.

The policy underlying their professions was resistance to the foreigner at all points. To the friendly ambassador of the Power most anxious to preserve Turkey, no less than to the humblest *concessionnaire* of the smallest nationality, everything was to be promised; but in both cases performance was to be indefinitely postponed, and the delusion was maintained until the means of prevarication and the patience of the victim were alike exhausted.

The negotiations in my own case, which, as it afterwards turned out, were uselessly protracted over many months, would furnish a most curious illustration of the system, if it were worth while to go into details. The only consolation I derived from my experience was, that it differed in no respect from that of the representatives of the European Powers, and of foreigners generally; and

afforded no evidence that my demands were not perfectly reasonable, or that, under more favourable conditions, they were not of a nature to be appreciated and complied with. Indeed, during the whole period of my stay, out of seven Cabinet Ministers to whom I submitted the project, I never met one who did not profess the warmest approval of it, or who did not offer me his support; and in doing so, many of them were doubtless sincere. I would by no means wish to be understood as putting all Turkish officials in the same category; indeed the worst I have known has been a Christian. It has been owing to an unfortunate combination of circumstances that the more patriotic and high-minded of Ottoman statesmen, of whom many exist, have not been for the last year in a position to exercise a salutary influence upon public affairs; and if the empire is not first destroyed by European complications, I should not despair of a change taking place that may restore them to the imperial favour, and enable them to carry out those projects of reform which they perceive to be for the best interests of the country. There is no greater mistake than to suppose that the administrative system of Turkey is hopeless, or that there are no able and enlightened Turks willing to work in the direction of reform; but they must be encouraged and supported by foreign Powers who are just and impartial in their sympathies for all races and religions in the empire.

As things are, it would be no solution of the problem, even if it be possible, to eject the governing class from Europe ; for the misgoverned Moslem and Christian would still remain side by side in Asia, and a discrimination of sympathy between the two religions in Asia, on the part of foreign nations, would reproduce the evils which have already led to the extermination of more than a million of Christians and Moslems in Europe. It is surely in accordance with the highest dictates of morality that a misgoverned population, whether it be purely Christian or purely Moslem, or mixed, or whether it be in Europe or in Asia, has the same claim upon our common humanity. If we have a responsibility in the matter of Turkish rule at all, the narrow line of the Bosphorus cannot relieve us from it—certainly less than ever now that we have come under certain obligations towards the Asiatic population of Turkey by the Cyprus Convention. Whatever changes may be in store for Turkey, no matter where the seat of its government may be, the central administration will not the less need purification ; while the principles of government must in every case be such as shall apply equally to people of all races and religions, for as much diversity of race and religion exists in European as in Asiatic Turkey ; and the reform which this implies can only be achieved by the introduction of responsible government at the capital, and the establishment of popular chambers

in which all interests and religions shall be fairly represented.

The mistake which English Governments have made in dealing with this question, and which English politicians have fallen into in discussing it, has been to divide the population of Turkey roughly into Christians and Turks, and to consider that the antagonistic forces at work in the empire were opposed to each other upon the basis of this division. Nothing can be more incorrect. There are three main forces at work, more or less in antagonism; and from the days of the Crimean war, our Eastern policy has been defective, whether under Conservative or Liberal guidance, in consequence of this fact having never been clearly recognised. There are the Christians, subdivided and weakened by internal dissensions on grounds of race and religion; there are the Moslems, of whom the majority are not Turks, but who are united in religious sentiment, and comparatively undisturbed by race jealousies; and there is the Government, which is of mixed Moslem and Christian composition, the controlling power in it being, of course, purely Turkish. It was only to be expected that English politicians, known as philo-Christian or anti-Turk, should espouse the cause of the conflicting Christian nationalities against the Turkish Government; but what has been unfortunate is, that those known as pro-Turkish should support the Turkish Government, which is notorious

for corruption and incapacity, instead of espousing the cause of the Moslem population, and uniting it with that of the Christian against the administrative system. Of the three factors in the question—the Government, the Christians, and the Moslems—the Government and the Christians have both had their champions in England; but the most important, which is the Moslem population, has been ignored. And yet they thoroughly sympathise with those Christians who have not independent national aspirations in desiring its radical reformation. In fact, in its present phase, it is held in equal abhorrence and detestation both by Moslem and Christian;[1] but by perpetually showing a discrimination in sympathy and in measures of reform in favour of the Christian as against the Moslem, we produce an antagonism of religion that would not exist if our efforts were characterised by greater justice. For it is evident that a policy which favours the expatriation of Moslems from the soil of their fathers, in order that Christians may enter in to it on the

[1] The Constantinople correspondent of the 'Daily News,' who cannot be suspected of pro-Moslem sympathies, writes, alluding more especially to Asiatic Turkey: "An Indian Mussulman of high rank, who has been visiting Constantinople, states that his poor co-religionists are suffering, as he believes, more than the Christians from the misgovernment which exists, and expresses his regret that such a Government should be taken as a representative of what a Mussulman Government ought to be. . . . Christians and Turks alike, have given up the present Government as hopeless. The attitude of the whole population is that of despair."—'Daily News,' 28th Oct. 1880.

grounds of race or religion, must necessarily excite the strongest animosity against us on the part of a people naturally disposed to look to us for protection, and drive them reluctantly and in despair into the arms of their own Government. Nothing can be more certain than this, that any Christian Power who should undertake the reform of the central Government of Turkey in such a manner as to secure equal rights to Christian and Moslem, and relieve the professors of both creeds from the oppression and misrule under which they are suffering, would earn the gratitude and win the support of the whole Mohammedan population as well as the Christian, and acquire a *prestige* that would extend throughout Islam ; and this, as I have already said, can only be brought about by the introduction of popular institutions—which, as Khaireddin Pasha has so ably shown in his pamphlet, does not in any way conflict either with the letter or the spirit of the Koran.

It is in anticipation of this radical administrative change, and of the decentralisation which must result from it, that I think no time should be lost in urging upon the Porte in its own interest, the creation of local autonomy with provincial councils, popularly elected under governors-general, immovable for a term of years, throughout the empire; but the two provinces in Asia which most urgently stand in need of a measure of this description, are Armenia and Syria.

If they are to be preserved to the empire at all, it can only be by pursuing the policy which has succeeded so well in the case of our own colonies, of loosening the bonds that unite them to the central Government. It was in the hope that I should be able to illustrate this, on a small scale, to the authorities at Constantinople, that I proposed the colonisation of Eastern Palestine; and the fact that the political party then in power steadily resisted any measure, even of the most tentative description, tending to decentralisation, when privately suggested, only renders it the more incumbent upon the Governments chiefly interested in averting serious complications in Asia to take the matter in hand before it is too late. Apart from the clause in the Berlin Treaty especially affecting Armenia, the reasons which render it desirable that Armenia and Syria should be dealt with in the first instance, are to some extent identical. Both provinces contain a mixed Christian and Moslem population; in both, the popular discontent among Christians and Moslems alike, has reached an acute stage; both are chiefly inhabited by races not Turkish, and are looking to foreign Powers for relief—Armenia to Russia, Syria to England, and both intervene between the Russian frontier and the Mediterranean. To prevent that political interference from without, which, in the European provinces of Turkey in a like condition, has produced, first, serious political complications, and finally, massacres,

war, and violent disruption, the concession of a measure of local administrative autonomy to both becomes an imperative necessity—and this cannot be done in the case of Syria, without forcing upon our consideration the special necessities of Palestine, and the exceptional and prominent position that it has acquired politically under the new conditions which have been created by the late Russo-Turkish war, and the Treaty of Berlin.

Practically, the Congress of Berlin amounted to a European coalition against Russian aggression on Turkey in Europe, which must put an end henceforth and for ever to any designs on her part on Constantinople. The independence of Roumania, the erection of Bulgaria into a principality, the territorial intervention of Austria, the creation of Eastern Roumelia, are all so many barriers interposed between Russia and the Bosphorus, which time will only serve to strengthen. Relieved from the burden of any such design, though she may still labour politically to control the Slav States of the Balkan peninsula, she can henceforth concentrate her energies on conquest in Asiatic Turkey, and in accomplishing even more effectively the objects which she had proposed to herself by the acquisition of Constantinople. For in the days when the Russian policy of aggression on European Turkey was originated, Egypt was not, as now, the commercial highway and strategical road to India.

Nor did the occupation of Constantinople open the Mediterranean to her fleets, unless it was complemented by the occupation of a port in the Ægean. Now, however, that her frontier has been extended in the direction of Armenia, she is as near the Mediterranean from her Asiatic outposts as she ever was from her European. It is no further from her lines beyond Kars to the Bay of Alexandretta, than it is from her frontier on the Danube to the Dardanelles, while Alexandretta is not half as far from Egypt as Constantinople. Instead of a Treaty of Berlin, and sundry more or less independent States intervening between the Asiatic-Russian frontier and Alexandretta, there is the Christian nationality of Armenia loudly calling for foreign interference, a Moslem race of Kurds in a state of more or less chronic insurrection, and aspiring to complete independence, and a mixed Christian and Moslem peasantry in a condition of extreme destitution and suppressed discontent. These all constitute invitations rather than obstacles to an advance in this direction. But the temptation to the Russian population to embark in a campaign in Asiatic Turkey would not be the prospect of a port on the Mediterranean, or the relief of an oppressed population, but the fascination of a religious war which should have for its object the conquest of the Holy Places at Jerusalem. Every year about four thousand Russian pilgrims, composed largely of discharged

soldiers, make painful and laborious journeys to visit the sacred shrines. One comes in contact with them in crowds during the Holy Week, and it is impossible not to be struck by the air of fanatical superstition which characterises them. Russia at Alexandretta could not stop there; an advance on Jerusalem would be imperatively demanded by the religious sentiment of the country; and indeed, to judge by the site which she has chosen for her Hospice, she seems to have anticipated the contingency. Lieutenant Conder, in his 'Tent Work in Palestine,' says: "Standing on the approximate site of the old tower of Psephinus, the Russian Hospice commands the whole town [of Jerusalem], and is thought by many to be in a position designedly of military strength." While a writer in a recent daily paper justly remarks, in allusion to Palestine, that "if the conflict between the civilisation of the West and the autocratic barbarism of the North be ever committed to the arbitration of arms, nowhere is the contest so likely to be decided as in the region which guards the two roads from the Mediterranean to the Indian Ocean."[1] Once in possession of Palestine, she is astride on two seas, for Akaba would certainly before long be included in her boundaries. The only way of resisting her advance on the Red Sea would be by a previous occupation of that port; but this would

[1] St James's Gazette, 15th September 1880.

be attended with great difficulty and risk. With Russian arsenals at Haifa and Akaba, the route to India *viâ* Egypt would be practically closed, and her strategical position would be one that would give her political control of the East; for with Asiatic Turkey thus dominated, the independence of Persia would virtually be at end, and the Persian Gulf, no less than the Red Sea, would soon be open to her fleets. The rescue of Palestine from this fate, which otherwise appears inevitable, can only be accomplished by so strengthening and reforming the Turkish empire in Asia, that Russia would be deprived of any excuse for invading it, and would feel the task too hazardous to be undertaken lightly. In other words, such a degree of administrative autonomy must be granted to Armenia, Syria, and Palestine, as shall satisfy their local requirements and aspirations, and so secure their loyalty to the Sultan, and their cordial cooperation with the Ottoman troops against an invading army. If the Turkish Government refuses to see that the highest interests of the empire impose this duty upon it, a policy should, without delay, be adopted, which should anticipate the complications that must inevitably ere long be provoked by the enfeebled and disaffected condition of these provinces; and as the point at which such complications must ultimately culminate is Jerusalem, it is upon Palestine that this policy should, in the

first instance, be directed. We owe the Crimean war to a dispute which arose out of the conflicting pretensions of European Powers to the Holy Places; and we shall have another war, of which the theatre will be in their immediate vicinity, unless we take steps to avert the danger by insuring to Palestine a degree of independence under the rule of the Sultan which should carry with it the sympathy and approbation, and therefore the indirect protection, of European Powers, and so prevent it from becoming the object of a Russian religious crusade. It would probably be found impossible to solve the Eastern problem in any other way; for the ecclesiastical jealousies involved in the possession of Jerusalem are so violent, and the mistrust of European Powers of each other is so profound, that no one of them would agree to the occupation of Palestine by another except by right of conquest; but none of them would object to the creation of a small province, enjoying certain privileges from the Turkish Government, in which the burning questions of the "Holy Places" would remain undisturbed, and where, from the conditions of their existence as a race, every country in Europe would probably be represented among its inhabitants.

The scheme, however, that I propose, does not therefore involve any attack on the integrity of the Ottoman empire; on the contrary, it was suggested with a view of consolidating and strengthening an

outlying portion of the Sultan's dominions over which there is now no well-defined administrative organisation. Nor is it one altogether without precedent in our dealings with the Porte. The experiment of local administrative autonomy, under a special statute devised by the Governments of England and France, has been in most successful operation during the last twenty years in the Lebanon; and there is no reason why a form of local government which has answered so well in one province of Syria, should not be applied in a form modified to suit the special conditions in another—and why the same policy should not be attempted in Palestine, either by England alone, or jointly with any European Power willing to co-operate, which has rendered the Lebanon the most prosperous and contented province in the dominions of the Sultan.

It is only within the last few years that the territory to the east of the Jordan has been brought under any control by the central authority. And even now this control in the districts adjacent to that proposed for colonisation is little better than nominal. The establishment of a well-governed settlement in the Belka would have an immediate and most beneficial influence; to the south, over the magnificently fertile but turbulent state of Kerak—to the north and north-east, over the luxuriant pasture and rich arable lands of Jaulan and Hauran, where the settled population is still liable to Arab

incursions—and to the west, over the whole of Palestine; for, in addition to the stimulus which would be given to agricultural enterprise generally, and the benefits arising from the employment of native labour, the expenditure of capital, and the introduction of a proper system of farming with modern implements, it would afford facilities to the peasantry for borrowing money at moderate, instead of the present ruinous, rates of interest. The construction of the important lines of railway which I have suggested, would follow as a necessary consequence, though they should be undertaken by degrees, and with a due regard to financial conditions and local requirements. And there can be no doubt that the inauguration of such an enterprise would be the first step towards the restoration of the Holy Land generally to the prosperous condition which enabled it in olden time to maintain a dense and thriving population.

In this anticipation I am borne out by the testimony of all intelligent and unprejudiced travellers. Captain Burton, whose intimate knowledge of the country entitles his opinion to especial weight, says, in his 'Unexplored Syria:' "The Holy Land, when provided with railways and tramways, will offer the happiest blending of the ancient and modern worlds. It will become another Egypt, with the distinct advantage of a superior climate, and far nobler races of men." And again: "Syria and Palestine, I may

safely prophesy, still awaits the hour when, the home of a free, a striving, and an energetic people, it will again pour forth corn and oil, it will flow with milk and honey, and it will 'bear,' with proper culture, almost all the good things that have been given to man."

I could multiply quotations to the same effect from the reports of Colonel Warren, Lieutenant Conder, and other officers who have surveyed the country on behalf of the Palestine Exploration Fund, which are fully borne out by the opinions of old residents, and by the experience of those who have already become agriculturists in the country.

From whatever point of view, then, we regard a project that has for its object the ultimate regeneration of Palestine,—whether from one of sentiment, as involving the repatriation of a nationality which surely has its claims upon us equal to, if not greater than, those of the Slav or the Greek; or from one of practical benevolence—for a considerable resident population would immediately benefit, while the success of the experiment would promote its extension to regions sorely in need of development under a like system; or from one of political expediency—for it is only by means of such development that the Ottoman empire in Asia can either be preserved and consolidated, or adequate provision made for the contingency of its disruption;—it holds out inducements which the public of England should be the

first to recognise: for as we have special interests, so we have come under special obligations in regard to this quarter of the globe. The population of Palestine in particular, of which 25,000 belong to the Hebrew race, is looking to England for protection and the redress of grievances; and those who see in the relations which our own country now occupies towards the Holy Land, the hand of Providence, may fairly consider whether they do not involve responsibilities which cannot lightly be ignored.

APPENDIX.

I.

Mr Laurence Oliphant's Scheme for the Colonisation of Palestine.

(*From the 'Jewish Chronicle,' January* 9, 1880.)

"*Si le Messie viendra nous rassembler en Palestine, je le prierai de m'offrir l'ambassade de sa Majesté Judaïque à Paris!*" It is such an observation as this, of a well-known French banker, which makes non-Jews ask us if we still seriously hope for the Restoration, and, if it came, whether we should accept the position and leave the countries of our adoption. It is the old story of the Israelites returned from exile to their native land, longing for the hanging-gardens and the soft sensuous delights of Babylon. When Jeshurun waxed fat he kicked, and he wanted to remain in his well-stored manger. But there are many of the children of Jeshurun who have not waxed fat, and are lean and hungry, even as Cassius himself. The prosperous Jews form but a small portion of our brethren. Those who are comfortable and content are comparatively few. These, perhaps, would be loath to leave their assured and luxurious

homes to find a new country and a new civilisation. But those who are oppressed and unhappy long for the advantages which a reconsolidated nationality would give them. Oppression and persecution have kept our people, as a body, alive and homogeneous. The more the Jew is downtrodden, the more he clings to the faith of his fathers and its observances. Liberated and anxious to compete, socially, with his fellow-countrymen, he throws over the restrictions which are deeply respected by those whom he would conciliate by their abandonment, with the simple result of making himself appear contemptible and sycophantic. It is oppression, and not prosperity, which will lead us back to our proper place in the Holy Land.

It cannot be denied that at no period of our modern history have there been so many forces at work which tend directly to the Great Restoration. Signs and portents abound, and the air is thick with rumours. Can these be the precursors of the Event, or are they but evidence of the restless spirit of advanced civilisation? Who can tell? Those who earnestly desire what is, or should be, inborn in their blood, can only wait and watch, assisting these movements to the best of their ability.

Mr Laurence Oliphant's scheme, detailed by a correspondent in our last week's issue, contains the most feasible plan that has yet been put before the world. It is unnecessary to recapitulate particulars which have been succinctly set forth. It is impossible, in the present stage, to suggest modifications of it before the full details are before us; and it is strongly to be hoped that the matters that have affected the relations between the Porte and the British Embassy may not once more delay Mr Oliphant's progress towards success. At present, the matter is a purely commercial and administrative speculation; but the very practicability and non-sentimentality of its character

is an assurance of its feasibility. Mr Oliphant has, as we can avouch from personal knowledge, selected the very best spot available for the purpose (for who has not heard of the fertility of Gilead and its balms ?), and has laid down conditions which contain the elements of prosperity. At present, the only requisite quality which our brethren possess, or adequately fulfil, is that of the possession of capital, and that they are asked to give, not as gift, but as remunerative investment. This, to say the least of it, is a by no means injudicious way of appealing to our feelings. We can place some of our *protégés*, our brethren in Palestine, in positions where they can be self-supporting, and teach them, at the same time, the industry which led to the rise of the nation ; for, in the first instance, Hebraic prosperity took its rise in agricultural power of application and technical knowledge. The scheme of Jacob and the peeled sticks and rods is thought by some to show evidence of acquaintance with the highest forms of animal breeding and physiology; while others attribute it, perhaps with more show of reason, to the miraculous interposition of Providence. We are an agricultural people, and we shall become so again. The enormous extension of American industry and commerce has taken its origin in cultivation and farming, notably during the present year. A nation always begins by producing food-stuffs, and prospering in that, goes on to manufactures. It would be a great elevation of the Jewish character in the eyes of the world at large, could they prove themselves capable of conducting a colony, harmoniously and reputably, under the present lawless conditions of Ottoman rule. It must be a peaceful triumph worthy of the days of the Messiah, when all shall be peace. Even now, of their own accord, our brethren of Palestine are beginning to show that they appreciate the advantages to be gained from agricultural industry, as the letter of the same

correspondent reporting Sir Henry Layard's conversation, which is in the highest degree interesting and important, amply proves.

Without being able to promise Mr Oliphant our full support until we are in possession of all details of government, and of the knowledge of the individuals in whom the local government is to be vested, we can go so far as to say that, up to the present, the scheme recommends itself strongly to the consideration of all earnest and sincere Jews. We shall watch its completer development with intense interest and watchful anxiety.

Almost coincidentally with the publication of Mr Oliphant's plans comes the scheme of Mr Cazalet, exposed at length in our leader of the 12th ult. It seems strange, and yet most reassuring, that two men of culture and thought have hit upon a similar scheme for the regeneration of Palestine and Syria. There are persons who think that the Restoration is to be brought about by a supernatural *coup de théâtre*, and that it cannot be accomplished without the intervention of startling and directly apparent miraculous means. The ways of Providence are inscrutable, and much that appears to us merely the result of natural evolution, may be, although not clearly visible, the silent working of the Great Power. There are many who believe that miracles are daily performed, and it cannot be said that their theories are utterly untenable. There is no reason why all the prophecies, in which the vast majority of us devoutly believe, may not be fulfilled in an apparently natural and consequent manner. It is not our purpose to give any undue importance to Mr Oliphant's scheme. It may be found not to hold water on close examination, but, on the other hand, it may be productive of vast and singular benefit. Mr Oliphant is avowedly a free-thinker. He has no religious motives. Christianity is to him of as little

consequence as Judaism.[1] He is a politician with a theory to carry out and nothing more. Yet the least likely of us may be the instrument of Providence, and the least religious be guided by the hand of God. Heaven may lead a man of great intelligence, but of little faith, to become the precursor of the Messiah, who is to be, according to our belief, but a man of marvellous intelligence and power of influence and organisation. Exceptionally superior qualities of mind may, not improbably, be the result of the inspiration of God. King Solomon, under whose reign only were the Jews completely united, was but a man, even endowed with human failings in the highest and most animal degree. May not the Messiah, who is to unite all mankind in the common bond of an universal method of worship of the Creator, and thus to bestow peace on the world—for the majority of wars and dissensions are the outcome of religious and political difference—be but the Strong Man, strong-minded and strong-bodied; the Canning whom Mr Carlyle imagined, with his faulty philology but true historical insight? Agricultural colonies may not bring about the Restoration, but they cannot fail to benefit all who suffer from want of direction to their labours and from want of aliment. To wait for a miracle, directly visible, to assist in any work which may conduce to the great end, is to resemble children who, not strong enough to cast off parental leading-strings and to assist in the father's work, wait for him to give them their daily bread, without doing aught to contribute personally to its obtention. To work and to pray is the surest means of accomplishing human aims, but to pray without work is to cast ourselves indolently on the mercy of Him who has put before real workers earnest and ennobling labour. *Laborare et orare.*

[1] If the writer means by this that I have no religious belief, he labours under a mistake.

(*From the 'Jewish Chronicle,' June* 11, 1880.)

Although Mr Laurence Oliphant has returned from Constantinople without having obtained the signature of the Sultan to the *iradé* authorising the formation of a company for the purpose of colonising the fertile and unoccupied lands to the east of the Jordan with Jews, he by no means despairs of ultimate success. The present political situation at Constantinople is altogether exceptional, and it is quite impossible that it can last. The opposition to all reform and to all foreign influence calculated to ameliorate the present desperate condition of the Turkish empire, emanates from the Sultan and from the fanatical clique by whom he is surrounded at the Palace, and is directed, not against Mr Oliphant's scheme alone, but against every project which has been suggested during the past year either by foreign Governments or individuals, no matter how politically or pecuniarily advantageous they may have been. This attitude of fixed resistance to foreign influence, applied as it has been to the Treaty obligations of Turkey, has placed the English Government as well as the Governments of other European Powers under the necessity of adopting a course of action which must sooner or later break down the Palace obstructiveness, and restore to power the Turkish statesmen who are willing and able to adopt a liberal and enlightened policy. Mr Oliphant received the most positive assurances from the Minister of Foreign Affairs that his scheme had been unanimously approved even by the existing Cabinet, and that the Sultan's suspicions of all foreign proposals alone prevented it from being finally adopted, although in an interview which he had with his Majesty the Sultan denied this. Wherever the truth may be, there can be no doubt that the men who are destined to come back to power as soon

as the Sultan's obstinacy is overcome, are strongly committed to it. Among these may be mentioned the three former Grand Viziers, Khaireddin Pasha, Midhat Pasha, and Mahmoud Nedim Pasha, all of whom have expressed their approval in the most unequivocal terms, of a project which, in fact, one of them assisted Mr Oliphant to elaborate. Prudence suggests, therefore, that for the moment nothing should be done until a change occurs at Constantinople, and this we trust Mr Goschen, in concert with the ambassadors of one or more European Powers, may speedily effect. Meantime we would strongly deprecate an agitation which has been recently set on foot in London to take some action in the matter, and which seems rather to have its origin in an unreasoning outburst of religious zeal on the part of those who desire to forward their peculiar theological crotchets, than in any knowledge of facts or appreciation of the existing political or financial conditions in the Turkish empire. Mr Oliphant's proposal has been recognised in Turkey by those conversant with the position of the Jews in the East, and the local circumstances generally, as a sound and practical scheme containing all the elements of success. It has been drawn up at Constantinople with the assistance both of Jews and Turks filling official positions, and it is not likely that the crude imaginings of a clique of religious fanatics in London would produce anything more likely to be acceptable to the Turkish Government.

II.

The Colonisation of Palestine.

(*To the Editor of the 'Jewish Chronicle.'*)

Sir,—I have been much interested by a letter which appeared in a recent number of the 'Jewish Chronicle,' addressed to you from Bucharest by a society formed there for the colonisation of the Holy Land, and signed on behalf of 100 families by Abraham Weinfeld, the President, and four members. From this it would appear that the sum of £1600 has already been raised there, and that it is estimated that a further amount of from £800 to £1000 is required to enable the emigrants to meet the first expenses of purchasing the land and founding the colony. This sum they appeal to the Board of the Montefiore Testimonial Fund Committee to supply.

I am not in a position to know what may be the views of the Board upon the subject, but in case there should be any difficulty in providing funds from this source, I feel convinced that a much larger sum than that applied for by the Roumanian Association, could be easily raised in England from extraneous sources; and that, if the Association are merely prevented by lack of funds from forming a scheme of emigration on a much larger scale, there would be no difficulty in finding the necessary capital in this country. In order, however, to satisfy themselves upon this point, as well as to make the necessary arrangements, it would be desirable for them to send a deputation of one or more members of their body to London, properly authorised to make such arrangements.

The Roumanian Association are probably not aware that

by the Ottoman Colonisation Law they are entitled to take up and cultivate any amount of unoccupied land they may desire without purchase, on condition of becoming Turkish subjects; and that there are in the Caimakamliks of Tiberias and Jenin about 200,000 acres of most eligible land for this purpose.

Having just returned from a careful examination of the capabilities of the Holy Land for colonisation, and having subsequently obtained all the information bearing upon the subject at Constantinople, I may perhaps be able to offer the Roumanian Association some assistance or advice which may be of use to them. Should you be in communication with them, I would esteem it a favour if you will inform them that it will give me great pleasure to forward their views by any means in my power.—Yours obediently,

LAURENCE OLIPHANT.

ATHENÆUM CLUB, 20*th September* 1880.

PALESTINE AND ROUMANIA.

(*To the Editor of the 'Jewish Chronicle.'*)

SIR,—We are duly in receipt of your journal of the 24th of September, containing the kind letter of your correspondent, Mr Oliphant, in answer to our communication inserted in your columns. Your paper came to hand on the 26th Tishri (1st October). We will not describe in detail the enthusiastic joy which the cheering and precious words of your correspondent caused us—words full of confidence and hope, and breathing the deepest sentiments of patriotism. On the holy Sabbath בראשית—the Sabbath on which we begin to recite anew the words of the living God from His holy and pure law; in which we read the common origin of the

whole world, and the history of Israel in particular—the people that went forth from bondage to freedom, and to whom God gave the Holy Land as a good and fruitful possession, in order that the descendants of Abraham and the followers of Moses the man of God might dwell therein, each under his vine and under his fig-tree, eating of its fruit in purity, and enjoying its goodness with thoughts of holiness,—on that sacred day, we, the members of the Society for the Colonisation of the Holy Land, all assembled at the Beth Hamedrash of the late pious Rabbi Meir Lebus Malbin, of blessed memory, for divine service. The President of the Society was called to the law and pronounced a blessing on your esteemed correspondent and on you, the honoured editor of the 'Jewish Chronicle,' for your earnest endeavours to benefit your distressed brethren who are longing to earn their bread in the cultivation of the sacred soil of Palestine. The whole assembled congregation raised their voices on high, invoking, as a blessing, that we might all have the merit of uttering a threefold blessing on you in the coming year, in the house of God to be raised in our new colony. Then will the plougher meet the reaper, and the husbandman and his yoke of oxen will together cry Hed! May this be the will of God! Amen.

And now that we have poured forth the powerful sentiments we feel towards you and Mr Oliphant, we will return to the subject of our petition. We have already described the terrible position which the Jews occupy in Roumania, and how every day adds its curse to those that preceded it. The recent and cruel order issued by the Government to expel certain Jewish traders from the villages, has spread fearful destitution among thousands of families, who have till now earned their livelihood by honest labour, and in places where these our brethren were always ready to

stretch out a helping hand to the oppressed and needy. Now, alas! they are fleeing for bread, the wrinkles gathering on their brows, and their children's faces betraying signs of misery, and none of them knows whither he shall turn. The cry of distress has reached the borders of Roumania, and the prayer of the flock of Jacob has ascended to heaven. We are informed of the consternation that has followed close on the heels of their cruel edict, in No. 36 of the 'Fraternetate' (a paper published in the Roumanian language by our esteemed and learned co-religionists). And if our generous brethren in Great Britain do not extend to us a helping hand,—the Jews of Britain, who are distinguished by the intensity of their love of patriotism—the British Jews, who excel all our other brethren of the Captivity in their reverence for the memory of ancient days,—if these do not turn to our appeal in the time of distress, then indeed may the Roumanian Jews prepare for utter destruction. We have already described our scheme in detail, and have declared that we have no desire to accept a gift from any man, but we seek help in the shape of a loan, to be repaid in a specified number of years. The creditors will hold the colony, which they are to found, on mortgage.

We see from your correspondent's letter that our words have, with God's help, met with a warm reception among our brethren the Jews of England. He assures us that there will be no difficulty in providing the funds needed for our project, but explains that we should send representatives to London to confer on the various details and preparations which require deliberation. Though the sending of a deputation would at the present time entail considerable outlay, yet we will not consider that, but are willing to exhaust our last resources in providing the necessary funds for the expenses of the deputies, in addition to the four

hundred francs which each of us has promised to contribute. We are prepared to do our part in the matter as soon as we receive from you the intelligence that the negotiations are begun, and that steps are taken to hasten our deliverance. We trust to be able, within a month's time, to send our deputies to England; and we entertain the hope that we shall be able to prevail on our excellent friend, Mr Eliezer Rokeach, to proceed to London. He is already well known for his intense love for his people, and for his voluntary undertaking to visit foreign lands for the purpose of obtaining for the poor Jews of Palestine encouragement from their benevolent co-religionists in their schemes for the cultivation of the ground. And it is to him that we owe the first impulse to the project which we have now actively undertaken.

We venture once more to call your particular attention to the fact that, if our generous brethren in London are disposed to lend us their valuable aid, it would be an easy matter to obtain a lease from the Turkish Government for any number of years, and that we should without difficulty be able to pay off the loan in ten years. Many other cherished designs, which we have in contemplation, are bound up with this scheme, for the execution of which we are in need of necessary funds, but we cannot enumerate them in a letter. We feel sure that our representative will lay our proposals before you in detail, and that thereupon the wisest and most prudent measures will be determined on.

We have a strong hope, also, that the Montefiore Committee will entertain our proposal, and that the Board of Deputies will not hold aloof from a scheme which has such great advantages to recommend it. The British Jews will, we are confident, set an example in being the first to raise the foundation-stone of our national reunion.

We feel bound once more to express our profound gratitude to your esteemed correspondent for his generous encouragement, and not less to you for lending us the aid of your journal, and instilling into the minds of English Jews sentiments of sympathy for their deeply oppressed brethren. May the great God of Israel reward each according to his merits, and may the works of those who strive for Israel's restoration be never forgotten! Acccept, sir, our fervent and devoted thanks for your disinterested kindness.—We remain, sir, your most obedient servants,

THE COMMITTEE OF THE SOCIETY FOR THE COLONISATION OF PALESTINE.

BUCHAREST, 3*d October* 1880.

(*To the Editor of the 'Jewish Chronicle.'*)

SIR,—I have read in your valuable journal of the 24th September a letter from Mr Laurence Oliphant, in which he promises us aid from London for the colonisation of the Holy Land. I thank you for your assistance in the holy cause, and at the same time thank Mr Oliphant for the enthusiastic proposal which he has published for our benefit. But to avoid any misunderstanding, we wish it clearly and distinctly to be understood that, on account of Roumanian persecution, many Jewish families have been deprived of their daily bread, and that, in consequence, an association of one hundred families has been formed, which wishes to emigrate in a body. The means of each member amount to 400 francs, and the total sum on which we can reckon is therefore 40,000 francs. Our wish, then, is, that either the Montefiore Testimonial Committee, or some generous Jews in London who have the means at their disposal, will help

us with as much money as we require for purposes of colonisation. This money is not to be regarded as a gift but as a loan, which we would repay in a few years. In the earnest hope that your esteemed correspondent, Mr Oliphant, will honour us with an early and full answer, I beg to subscribe myself yours obediently,

THE PRESIDENT OF THE COMMITTEE FOR THE COLONISATION OF THE HOLY LAND.

BUCHAREST, 10*th October* 1880.

THE END.

PRINTED BY WILLIAM BLACKWOOD AND SONS.

Birket
Mahneh
Beida
Beloola?

